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# LIFE BEGINS AT FORTY



# **LIFE BEGINS AT FORTY**

**BY  
WALTER B. PITKIN  
PROFESSOR IN JOURNALISM,  
COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY**

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## *Preface*

THIS little book has been written by request. Many people who have attended lectures I have given on the subject have asked that the material be brought together. So here it is.

In the six years that have elapsed since I first gave serious attention to the difficult problem of adult reorientation, the scenes have shifted considerably, and the colors have changed. Not a few earlier ideas had to be surrendered, while wholly new thoughts forced themselves into the texture. Nevertheless the broader pattern seems still intact and unfaded. I hope it will stand up under the wear and tear of life in the new age we now enter.

WALTER B. PITKIN.

NEW YORK,  
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# LIFE BEGINS AT FORTY



## *Chapter I*

### WE ENTER, ENVYING

YOU who are crossing forty may not know it, but you are the luckiest generation ever. The advantages you are about to enjoy will soon be recited, with a sincere undertone of envy. The whole world has been remodeled for your greater glory. Ancient philosophies and rituals are being demolished to clear the ground for whatever you choose to erect upon their sites. Every day brings forth some new thing that adds to the joy of life after forty. Work becomes easy and brief. Play grows richer and longer. Leisure lengthens. Life's afternoon is brighter, warmer, fuller of song; and long before the shadows stretch, every fruit grows ripe.

Best of all, though, is your inner deliverance. A better age has delivered you from the Conviction of Incompetence, that curse of the middle years. The men of old believed that life was ended at forty, and for them, alas, it often was. So, as the thirties slipped by, their spirits flagged; they grew disconsolate, embittered, hard; and they looked upon the young with an

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envy that built a wall of hate between the generations. But this wall is crumbling under the blasts of a new trumpet. Year by year the line between youth and age thins and fades. Already the patriarchal family has vanished. Parents and children are simply human beings of the same blood under one roof; they are not hostile clans. Grandfather dances a jig at little granddaughter's birthday.

The ancient clash of interests is succeeded by a division of labor. For youth the tasks of youth; for age the tasks of age. And for every man his own life, to be ordered and adorned as he will. Man is no longer slave to man; but all men pull together to enslave atoms and molecules. Where of old the growing boy had to drudge his years away, now an engine turns the trick. The Machine Age emancipates muscle first, then mind also; and, as we shall try to show, makes it possible for all men to be men as long as they live.

High excitements lie ahead of you now turning forty. The race has nibbled the fruits of wisdom and found them both sweet and sustaining. Thus far it has turned to account almost nothing of its inventions and discoveries. The world is still to be civilized; and, in your day, this supreme process will begin. Were you to be no more than idle spectators, all other ages, past and future,

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would envy you. But you will be more than that: you will eat the meat of giants and overtop all your ancestors. You will soon look through a 200-inch telescope and scan the back yards of the moon as if they were at the bottom of a little hill. You will remodel your frames and your temperaments with cunningly concocted foods and pills. You will have little cause to worry over the price of clothes and rent. Or, if you do not live to see such wonders, you will at least behold them drawing near—which, of itself, will be a wonder.

You will, in a subtle fashion, be even luckier than your descendants; for they will be born in civilization and find all its splendors commonplace. But you, who have known the barbarians and have been choked by the stench of diseased millions and have watched fifty million wretches die in a dirty brawl called war, under the lead of gangsters, will taste the full, tingling bouquet of a wine which, made of a million years of human vintage, is about to be tapped for the first time.

Yes, you are the luckiest of all. Life begins at forty—now more richly than ever before, and perhaps as richly as ever again.

### *Life Begins at Forty*

Life begins at forty.

This is the revolutionary outcome of our New Era. This is the supreme reward of the Machine

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Age, the richest blessing of science. Day before yesterday it wasn't even a dream. Yesterday it was a silly lie. Today it is half a truth. Tomorrow it will be an axiom.

At what did the Minds behind the Machine Age aim? The saving of labor. That's agreed, isn't it? Every achievement of physicists, chemists, inventors, and engineers since Eli Whitney made the first cotton gin has lightened the day's work of some toiler. Thereby they sped up production, cut the cost of manufacture, and, quite incidentally, shortened the hours of toil so that men had more leisure.

Before the Machine Age, men wore out at forty. When the World War broke out, the British found their recruits from mine and mill town "already ageing at thirty-five. Most of the industrial classes around Manchester were, for military purposes, old men at 38 . . . The list of their disabilities was appalling." So testifies the chairman of a medical board in England of 1915. Of the world's two billion odd souls, more than a billion still work themselves into early graves. The peasant, the sailor, the dock worker, the frontiersman and the coolie die the youngest, for the Machine has aided them the least of all. But in all the more progressive factory centers life grows easier—in spite of depressions and wars.

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Thanks to hard times, industries are rapidly adopting the five-day week and the six-hour day. We shall never go back to the old order; for we shall make all the world needs and can buy on this new schedule of leisure. A man of fifty can now handle five hundred acres of plowland with much less strain and vastly more profit than a pioneer of 1840, his wife, and their seventeen children could handle a hundred acres. Give our modern middle-aged American a good tractor with proper gang plows, harrows, drills, and combines, and he will work ten or twelve acres a day with hardly more effort than he drives his automobile. The pioneer, driving his heaviest team, turned over, at best, two acres of soil a day; and when the sun set, he had walked nearly fifteen miles up and down the heavy furrows. Give her the best milking machines and electricity in her home, and a woman of fifty can handle ten times as many dairy cows as any husky peasant wench astraddle of a milking stool.

Thanks to Super-Power and the Machine, housework is becoming a joke; so, as this happens, men and women alike turn from the ancient task of *making a living* to the strange new task of *living*. And here we arrive at the Revolution.

For the past million years 99.999 per cent of all who have been born have spent most of



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their time and energy in making a living. Only the South Sea Islanders, the hoboes, and the inmates of asylums (a few years ago we would have included the rich here) have risen triumphantly above this dire necessity. Is it to be marveled at, then, that so few of us know how to live? Or that many of us have been fooled into thinking that we find the largest free outlet for our personalities in our jobs? This is one of the Million American Myths. Any man small enough to be absorbed by the activities of pounding a linotype machine or entering bank deposits in a ledger or selling overalls to country grocers or greasing automobiles in a garage or writing advertisements for talcum powder is much too tiny to attempt reading these pages. Possibly one job in 500 contains within its own routine variety, difficulty, and suggestiveness enough to stimulate both the body and mind of the worker. The 499 other jobs compel their workers to look beyond the scene of toil for a chance to live. And, as there is less and less work to perform, this compulsion grows acute today. It is the central crisis of culture.

What hope of coming through it safely? I said, a moment ago, that at this particular moment in our history it is half a truth that life begins at forty. Money and education and native ability combine variously to make it so.

## WE ENTER, ENVYING

Glance at incomes, and you will see how. Would a worker make something of his life outside of his job? Then he must have a little money over and above bald necessities. Not much, to be sure. But surely a thin margin. How fares it with us today? Who has this margin? Who lacks it?

Life begins long before forty for some 700,000 Americans born rich enough to do nearly as they please. It begins around forty for some 3,000,000 more whose individual incomes and savings rise through early maturity to something better than \$2,000. And it might easily begin at forty for another 12,000,000 or 14,000,000, if these were to organize their affairs to that end from youth onward.

For the remaining one hundred and ten million Americans, though, can life ever begin? As matters stand now, they spend their days grubbing away for bread and butter; now and then they take a brief vacation which is little more than a waking sleep. Whether many of them might, through better schooling, better health, and better drill in their vocations, advance to intelligent leisure and fruitful days is a controversial question. Some thinkers are sure that no substantial gains are possible, inasmuch as this herd is constitutionally stupid. Others challenge this depressing opinion; they

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maintain that the manifest dullness of these masses has been caused by bad food, by overwork, by uncongenial toil, by premature marriage, by alcohol and tobacco, by epidemics, by climate, and by other external forces that weaken mind and body. Stamp out these forces, so they reason, and most of these millions will grow brighter, livelier, abler in their jobs, thriftier, and saner in managing themselves; hence life will begin at forty for them, too.

I incline to agree, in the main, with this second view. I shall argue that many millions of our citizens can get much more out of their fourth, fifth, and sixth decades of life than out of any of the first, simply by learning how to live and how to make the most of opportunities within reach. Further I shall maintain that the more fortunate millions in the upper income classes can double or treble their enjoyment merely by mastering a modern philosophy of life.

## *Chapter II*

### YOUTH IN THE RED

NOT once have I sighed for childhood and youth again. Not that I have reason to flee and forget those early years. They were, in their fashion, happy and exciting. No sorrow fell across them, nor any notable defeat. But living has always been forward. What is done is done, for better or for worse. There is no recall. There can be no repeating. In the Everlasting Now, all yesterdays and all tomorrows are only items within a pulsating immediacy. Hence I cannot feel as Santayana in his sonnet:

Such is youth;  
Till from that summer's trance we awake, to find  
Despair before us, vanity behind.

Nor can I soberly imagine myself in gloom over tomorrow simply because I have fewer years to live than when I was sixteen. Life after forty has been much more exciting and profitable than before forty. For each loss there has been a greater gain. Nor are these gains fictions of a rationalizer. They can be named and pointed out.

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From birth to seventeen we are busy growing up. This is a period of pleasant confusion and tingling mysteries; for the weak and the coddled it is also a terribly dangerous period of irresponsibility, during which they lean on parents and other elders for support and management. The weakling loves this too much; and it becomes his ruin. The strong rebel against it and somehow escape. But for weak and strong alike these years are not living in any rich sense; they are animality.

Nobody under seventeen ever knows anything, ever has a clear thought on any important subject, ever attains an important skill except perhaps in music, ever gains full control of wild emotions, ever converses interestingly, or ever does anything in the way of living as a mature person. In saying this, I utter the banal and the axiomatic, of course. Everything in babe, child, and adolescent changes much too fast to acquire pattern or power.

From seventeen to twenty-two or thereabouts we learn the social life, in business no less than in pleasure; and most of us marry and settle down at the close of this period. Girls usually wed around twenty-two, youths at twenty-four in our country. Then all start to make a living; and ninety-five out of every hundred never turn from this devastating task. The toil of

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raising children joins with the long, hard pull of buying a home and pushing up the worn rungs of the success ladder. As the world wags, these enterprises consume the best energies until forty, at least. Then, or never, we begin to live our own lives.

So things have gone for many and many a year. But slowly the scene darkens for youth. Life begins much later in America than elsewhere. This is partly the result of superior conditions, and partly the result of inferior. But which conditions are superior and which inferior may be a controversial question. We prolong childhood astonishingly. Is that wise or foolish? In my opinion, it is evil; but some excellent citizens hold otherwise. There can be no denying, though, that our educational system keeps us immature far into the years when the rest of the world is grown up. This infantilism of Uncle Sam must be considered here, simply because of the peculiar part it plays in deferring the commencement of mature life until after forty. Look away from a score or more of dazzling exceptions to the national trend, and what do we see? A people held in sweet bondage to babydom.

Our schools of childhood are wonderful; from kindergarten to high school they are the finest ever. Americans are at their best in handling

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children—and at their worst in dealing with ex-children who ought to be handled as grown-ups. The shame of our land is the high school, and the world's worst joke is our standard liberal arts college. Our ablest are there disabled.

This is not the place to recite the oft thundered indictment of the high school. Let me quote Professor Jesse H. Newlon, of Columbia, director of the Lincoln School, as he boiled down the truth into one capsule of venom, served up at the 1932 Conference on Secondary Education. Said he, in part:

The American secondary school is a stronghold of conservatism, whose curriculum is hopelessly traditional and not vitally connected with the needs of youth. The inertia of the secondary school is tremendous. Its teachers and administrators, with few exceptions, are but stereotypes of an outworn concept of education. Every attempt to affect fundamental changes had been stubbornly resisted by a majority of its personnel.

Everything is done to prevent life after twenty. Algebra is taught under compulsion to millions who can never use it even in intellectual play. French, English, and other grammar is drilled into resistant minds which never learn to speak any language well and can find no meaning in the grammar itself. Those who have absolutely nothing to say are assiduously driven to write it out in full, over and over, until that little nothing shrinks to a negative quantity

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and quality. Athletics are socialized and commercialized to the point at which all fun and all benefit to the individual evaporate. False standards of dress, manners, and cosmetics are taught in the larger cities; witness the famous case of Detroit, where little girls out of the Polish and Goulash Belt are daintily manicured as they enter school each morning, all at the dear public's expense. But all this is, I dare say, an old story to you. Enough of it!

Youth must not be blamed for this. The crime is that of the elders, of course. But we are now describing things as they are; so we must add that an amazing multitude of our young people learn nothing at high school and college. Thousands come out, degrees under their arms but nothing under their skulls. And some even know less than when they entered. Is this absurd? Well, read the report of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, wherein Learned and Wood submit the results of tests in more than forty high schools and colleges in Pennsylvania.

Seniors know standard words, historical facts, and basic information no more accurately than freshmen. While they improve in general science considerably, they stand still or fall behind in most other subjects. What business man cannot testify to the appalling incompetence of the



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college graduate? We grant that the graduate has a mind superior to most of those who do not go to college; but his mind has not been trained in the substantial skills. He reads slowly and inaccurately. He has forgotten most of the arithmetic he acquired in grammar school. He has become a past master in the art of airy nothings, dinner shirts, flip conversations, and sport slang.

What the schools leave undone in the way of intellectual and moral corruption, the home and our dear old American prosperity of bygone years finished with a fine flourish of deviltry. Pampered at home by their parents and nursed along with sugared lies about their country and its leaders, these young people have never developed even the normal elemental interests and hungers which we should expect in good animals.

Mournfully I am forced to agree with that genial philosopher, Robert E. Rogers, in 'his well-argued contention that "the wantlessness of our educated young people keeps them from even realizing what they might be."

That which they can have without money or success, which will be a permanent investment for them, they have not the slightest interest in: a well stored mind, the speech and manners of gentlefolk, a disciplined and quick apprehension, mental energy, the acquired capacity to be interested and to be interesting.

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For some years, says Rogers, in his charming little book on "How to be Interesting," he has traveled much in and out of Boston on trains filled with commuting students enrolled in the high schools, colleges, and technical schools of that erudite center. He has listened long to their conversation. They say absolutely nothing.

They talk interminably about grades, athletics, and personalities. They do not read the newspapers. They never discuss the content of their studies . . . Neither their families, their teachers, nor public opinion have ever taught them the possibilities of being educated and cultivated—of being interesting people . . .

The time they waste is appalling. They could do the larger part of their studies on those trains. They could read a good newspaper thoroughly; they might read any one of half a dozen well edited and well written magazines . . .

Here is the American scene! A sorry spectacle, I think. Millions of well-to-do people of all ages and culture who have never learned the first lesson of living.

Do you see the cruel burden thus thrown upon them when they come out of their so-called schools and try to manage on their own? Ten or fifteen years must be spent in the pains of eliminating from their nervous systems the poisons of miseducation and fraudulent culture. During this heart-breaking struggle young men must rise in business, while young women must

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bear children and set up homes. When they most need a fair chance to think themselves out into the clear, they can devote little time to it. Only the robust and the well-balanced come through with flying colors. They finally discover that their education began after leaving college. They begin to live long after the servant, Maggie, finding an old cap and gown in the attic, sells these to the ragman.

In the main, however, life does not begin even at forty for our graduates. They never find themselves. And the last twenty years have raised fresh obstacles for them. The higher types of work call for more and more thorough preparation. Superior young people must spend more years in special training, be it in a professional school or in a laboratory or in an office. Few young physicians get out on their own long before thirty. Likewise with engineers. Would-be college professors arrive around thirty-five at the earliest. Technicians in the industries and in merchandising fare little better. Among the hundreds of able graduates I have watched during the past twenty-seven years, scores have failed to find their first positions until after thirty-five, though they have, to be sure, earned bread and butter at odd jobs earlier.

All this, I admit, is not the fault of youth as such; it is the effect of stupid education in a

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peculiar era of industrial expansion and social collapse. Twenty-five years hence the evil may have passed. Surely we all hope so. What then, of the well-educated young person in the modern world? Will life begin for him much earlier? I fear not.

Skill in the higher levels can never be acquired until the lower levels involved in that same skill have been so thoroughly mastered that they function without being attended to. The student of piano playing who has to observe the keys which his fingers are to strike next cannot play any music properly. Not until fingering has become automatic can he employ this particular in playing a sonata.

Now this implies something that has, so far as I know, been overlooked. The more stages of skill involved in a given accomplishment, the longer one must work; hence the later one arrives, as a rule. Careers support this unmistakably. Complexity, depth, and breadth postpone achievement. Life begins at forty for masters of thoughtful literature, of architecture, of high drama, of diplomacy, and of music that is majestically organic in conception. Lowell J. Carr has shown that the average age at which American inventors of importance become established is 47.3 years.

Before forty, we may be excellent students, but almost never scholars; learned, but not wise;

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broadly informed, but not experienced. A few prodigies amass the raw materials of scholarship before life's median hour, but they never assimilate these until later. For time is the essence of scholarship, wisdom, and experience.

How many of us have, in some form, done what the twenty-nine-year-old Wordsworth did, when, as he set forth from old Goslar, in Germany, he resolved to organize all his intelligence, energies, and poetical powers to the single end of creating a titanic philosophy "Man, Nature and Society"! And how many of us have, again like Wordsworth, worked on and on for fifty years without finishing the task!

Nobody knows much about this complex world until he is close to forty. A hundred years ago, a youth might learn his world in a few intense years; and a man of thirty-five could master it, as far as anybody could. But today that is impossible. Broad and deep perspective is needed to grasp even your neighborhood affairs. Never before has a little knowledge been such a dangerous thing as now. The League of Nations? Prohibition? Trial Marriage? The Business Depression? What chance has any young person of seeing through such webs of fact, blunders, intrigue, and theory?

How little even our brightest college graduates know about anything in their late twenties

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and thirties! Pleasant, occasionally sparkling, they often spar around a subject in manner entertaining but never come to grips with it. And this, I feel sure, is one of the chief reasons for our shocking economic collapse. There was a vogue, some twenty years ago, of promoting young men to posts of high responsibility. It arose, I imagine, from their elders' natural wish to get out from under the heavy strain of swiftly expanding businesses. All would have been well if those youths had been retained as junior executives, carrying the heavy routine of tasks planned in peace and quiet by older, more seasoned men. But some young brilliants took the bit in their teeth and ran away with the show—ending up as most runaways do, in the ditch. Study the inside records of some of the most tragic bankruptcies and ruined fortunes; you will find a startling number of men under forty at the helm of the derelicts.

Now, we all know that the world must grow more complex. Every move toward international trade, every advance toward international disarmament, every triumph of international law adds to the intricacy of each major problem of business, no less than to that of politics, social welfare, and statecraft. True, the tendency toward local industry, local business, and neighborhood living must grow; and this will in some

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measure offset the ominous complicating of men's larger affairs. But I fear that the 2,500,000 leaders demanded by a world population of more than 2,000,000,000 and the 10,000,000 or more junior executives under those leaders will be confronted every morning with a deskful of problems which twenty years of preparation alone can solve.

Somehow young men must do most of this work. It crushes the old. Do you not see, then, the growing handicap of youth?

### *The Assets of Age*

Many young people believe that as one grows older a uniform decline sets in. Muscles weaken. Eyes grow dim. Ears thicken against the music of violins. The hand shakes. Reason totters. By fifty only the shell of a man survives.

Well, things are—thank heaven—hardly so bad. Everything depends upon the skill you have shown in choosing your grandparents and in managing yourself before forty. I concede that our highways are strewn with wrecks of humanity, rich and poor, famed and inglorious. But that merely proves how badly we have learned the art of living. Over against these derelicts you may set thousands of men and women who in their fifties and sixties get much more out of life than when younger; and again tens of thousands who find middle age nearly

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as exciting and as rich as youth. Finally you chance upon the rare—but not freakishly rare—specimen, the man who develops brawn, intelligence, and joy of living more richly after forty than most people do before that age. Have you not met such a lucky devil? If not, then read the life of the brilliant clergyman and orator Phillips Brooks. Almost an invalid in his youth, Brooks was excited by trifles and utterly exhausted over the simplest routine affairs. In school and college he suffered terribly from headaches. Classroom recitation, he testified, drove him crazy. Though he improved considerably after twenty-five, it was not until his thirties that he truly began to live. At the end of his college career, he was conspicuous for his inertia. He never walked or took other exercise save under compulsion, and his neurasthenic trend persisted.

When he began preaching, the effort shattered him. Slight changes in the weather bowled him over. Then came the miracle. Within a year or two, the invalid passed and a giant arose. His muscular strength suddenly quadrupled. Nothing could fatigue him. Year in and year out, he preached three times on Sundays and several times more during the week, carrying the heavy burden of parish work as lightly as a feather. He slept and ate like a soldier on march. And he was jolly as an old toper.



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We know this was due to some obscure shift in the endocrine balance; so we cannot credit Brooks's intelligence and self-control with more than a little of the transformation. So, too, in all like cases. I cite him here only to demonstrate to young people the error in the common idea that life after forty must be dull, unprofitable, and full of grief.

Brooks, we must admit, is not typical in every respect. After forty, people do change in various ways, and some changes strike the young as for the worse. Let us glance at a few psychological investigations; they will cheer the sour middle-aged no less than the cynical youth who looks upon forty as a living death.

After forty, most of us lose interest in changing our work, our play, our domicile, and our friends. More and more we prefer to be let alone. The pleasures of society pall on us—at first only a trifle, then considerably. While we grow surer of our abilities in advising and leading other people, we do not like such labor nearly as much as when we were younger and less wise. We dislike borrowing money and betting. And we like all forms of work slightly less than in youth, thereby attesting to a decline of energy. Our curiosity seems to dull; but that is probably due to the fact that we find so little that is genuinely novel and puzzling, after forty years of looking and listening.

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While we concentrate more and more on our keenest interests, we manage to enjoy—with only slightly reduced keenness—as wide a variety of things as we did in our twenties. We still show about as many marked likes and dislikes as we used to. In fact, one of the most striking features of life after forty is the continuity and stability of earlier interests on a plane of somewhat less intense feeling.

After forty no significant failing of dexterity sets in, if we may judge by the studies of G. E. Linger, H. Sorenson, and various vocational psychologists. On the contrary, the more intelligent and the more skilled show pronounced improvement in deftness of hand and fingers throughout middle age. In Linger's comparison of 181 working women with 152 highly cultivated women ranging in age from twenty-five to fifty years, it came out that the more intellectual women in the second group proved much more dexterous than the working women in all tests save one—and that one happened to be based on an activity pursued by the working women on their jobs. In all other tests working women showed a slight decline of skill around the thirtieth year, while the intellectuals showed none until the thirty-fifth—and then it was trifling.

Sorenson's experiments seem even more significant. He tested 100 people ranging from twenty-

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five to eighty-seven years. He employed a set of simple but ingenious dexterities of hand, finger, arm, leg, and foot. He found that one-quarter of the oldest people were quicker and more accurate than the group average—which is quite astonishing. His twelve oldest subjects, whose average age was seventy-nine years, were from 20 per cent to 30 per cent slower and less deft than the group average. Again astonishing, I think. I should have expected them to have been 40 per cent less dexterous, at least.

The brain continues to grow, in curiously irregular spurts, up to forty. But, as Frederick Tilney has demonstrated in his monumental study of that central organ, "The Brain from Ape to Man," it is never more than half developed and usually not even one-fifth used. As the brain grows only with use, by developing proper insulation of nerve fibers under stimulation, this fact means that nobody under forty works his mind sufficiently to mature it. Hence most of us past forty limp onward as half-wits in a new biological sense. Our central nervous system is less than half formed even at death.

I strongly suspect that this lack of sustained stimulation and effort is one of the causes of the early shrinking of the brain. Around the thirty-fifth year, the organ starts losing weight; and by sixty-five it usually has lost about 100 grams.

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Whether loss of weight necessarily involves loss of function has never been investigated, so far as I can ascertain. But we know something else for a certainty, and that is that lack of vigorous use leads to prompt decay. And I believe it will some day be rigorously demonstrated that most healthy people who fail to live richly after forty have only their own sloth or stupidity to blame. They will have crippled themselves before forty by indolence, by shirking, and by inane frivolity. The lady who lives the life of a butterfly in her twenties must expect to die young as butterflies do. The man who emulates the worm must accept the worm's brief career. Men of high and active intelligence are, as any life-insurance expert can tell you from his own records, notoriously long-lived; and this is no odd chance but rather the *effect* of mental stimulation.

Now we come to the one serious decline at forty. It is the waning of free energy. To belittle this would be folly; for it changes the entire pattern of life. And rare the man who rearranges his affairs and his outlook in harmony with this profound transformation! A large book might be written around this subject without exhausting its important phases. For life is activity, and activity is a series of energy changes—nothing more and nothing less.

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A man's energy is revealed in elemental form by the rate at which his body gives off heat; for heat means work done, be it in the brain or the stomach or a muscle. Physiologists measure this heat either by skin radiation or by the amount of oxygen taken from the air by the lungs. The energy transformed to keep the body running is called basal metabolism, while the excess used for special activities may be called marginal metabolism or free energy. The slower and the smaller the basal metabolism, the less energy will be made over in a given time for special kinds of work or play.

We burn up fastest during childhood and adolescence. As early as the twelfth year the fires subside at a great rate, measured relative to area of surface radiation: the drop is from fifty calories per hour per square meter of body surface in the twelfth year to slightly more than forty calories in the seventeenth. Then we hold this latter pace until past thirty-five. Between thirty-eight and forty, however, the first important slump comes, and foolish he who does not accept it with good grace! The slowing down of basal metabolism is gentle for fifteen years or even longer. But toward the close of the fifties, it goes down faster; at sixty it sags to about twenty-eight calories per hour per square meter of skin. The furnace of life then blazes only little more

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than half as hotly as it did in the twelfth year.

As a part of this waning, the endocrine activities subside very slowly more or less in parallel, though the sexual seem usually to drop off a little faster than the others. While the basal metabolism drops just before forty, the endocrines do not begin to do so until around forty-five. Keeness of hearing fades still earlier, often beginning at thirty; and one's taste and smell organs decline apace too. So here we come upon the liabilities of life after forty. Let's not pretend they are assets! What's to be done about them? Shall we declare ourselves bankrupt? Shall we settle at ten cents on the dollar and go out of business?

Not in the least! I maintain that the loss of free energy for strenuous activities need not cramp our style at all. On the contrary, it may be turned to profit by anybody who can keep on using his brain. For his brain can improve with use almost as long as he lives; and it can be used to manage all activities of the body, to the end of more health and happiness. Above all, it is the past master of economy; it makes the least energy deliver the greatest possible results, hence it serves man best of all after forty, when he must watch his horsepower.

To grasp the full force of this, we must look at certain remarkable discoveries in biology whose significance has never before been pointed out.

Little Willie had a monkey  
Climbing up a yellow stick.  
He licked the yellow paint all off it  
And it made him deathly sick.

The humming top is silent now,  
The stick is laid aside.  
The monkey does not jump around  
Since little Willie died.

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EDWIN A. HARRIS  
ATTORNEY AT LAW

*Chapter III*

FOOLS DIE YOUNG

**F**OOLS die young.

A fool, pondering this remark, might infer that all who die young are fools. But the intelligent reader knows better. Many a brilliant spirit has passed from the scene in childhood and youth. And, alas, we find altogether too many old fools. But always are the odds heavier against the idiot, the imbecile, and even the high-grade moron. In accidents, epidemics, and wars it is the fool who sizes up the confronting peril less quickly and less accurately than the clever. And it is the fool who, when duly warned of danger, sneers at the adviser or else delays until too late.

Research supports this somewhat obvious fact to an astonishing degree. Statistics show that the feeble-minded and the insane, even when protected within the walls of institutions, die considerably younger than the average man; and the latter dies younger than the superior. Why should this be so? The question



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intrigues me, so I shall impose upon your good nature for a few minutes by recounting the odd findings of some biologists and by drawing my own conclusions from these. Though it may be hard reading, please study with care. The labor will amply repay you.

Life does not begin at forty for the fool. It ends then or sooner, simply because the fool is a fool. The brain regulates the rate and manner of consuming energy. The better the brain, the more work it accomplishes with a given amount of physiological energy. And, in a rough way, the gross bulk of a brain, relative to total body weight, is a measure of brain quality in this particular respect. This fact is of such enormous significance that I must say more about it, at your own peril. If you go lost for a minute or two in the mazes of physiology and biology, don't be discouraged. You will be richly rewarded if you come to see that a good brain usually makes for a good body and efficient living, hence for a long life and a successful career after forty.

In 1908, Max Rubner published his findings on the relation between the sizes of animals and their natural ages. He was comparing species, so you must not apply his conclusions too literally to individuals. The amazing discovery Rubner made was that all animals, pound for

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pound, generate and consume energy at exactly the same rate. For each kilogram of body weight, a creature manufactures and then uses up 191,600 calories. So, concludes Rubner, a living body is a mechanism endowed with a fixed generative power which, when exhausted, brings death automatically.

But the rate at which this power is used varies from species to species, and from individual to individual. Some creatures use it fast and die young, while others use it slowly and stick around until most contemporaries have passed. By size and speed of effort, then, you may gauge to a nicety the probable life span of a fly, a mouse, an elephant, or a man.

A few years later H. Friedenthal found another set of significant relations between brain weight, body weight, and longevity. He calls the relation between brain weight and body weight "the cephalization factor," and in calculating the weight he subtracts from the gross total of the body weight the weight of bones and tendons; so, you see, body weight here means the amount of active protoplasm. Usually the bones and tendons weigh about one-third as much as the entire body; so he sets up the formula:

$$\text{Cephalization factor} = \frac{\text{brain weight}}{\text{body weight} \times \frac{2}{3}}$$

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As the cephalization factor rises, so does the natural length of life. In other words, the larger the brain in proportion to the protoplasmic mass it controls, the longer the animal lives. The mouse, whose index is .045, lives only two or three years. The rabbit, whose index is .066, lives eight. The deer, with .35 to his credit, lives fifteen. Man, at 2.7, has a maximum career of a round century.

Now, seven years ago, it occurred to me that some new conclusions might emerge from juxtaposing Rubner and Friedenthal. So I put their data and inferences together, with agreeably surprising results. All animals, we saw, produce the same amount of energy relative to their weights; they differ only in the rate at which they consume the energy. This rate, I find, is strangely parallel to the cephalization factor.

LENGTH OF LIFE DEPENDS UPON THE RATE AT WHICH AVAILABLE POWER IS CONSUMED. IT ALSO DEPENDS ON THE SIZE OF THE BRAIN RELATIVE TO THE WEIGHT OF ACTIVE PROTOPLASM IT MUST MANAGE. DOES THIS NOT INDICATE THAT THE BRAIN REGULATES THE CONSUMPTION OF POWER?

The physiologist will say, at this juncture, that he has known this for many years. So will the psychologist. True! The fact, by itself, is old. But, I maintain, its relation to length of life

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and intelligence is novel and past all exaggerating. I think it holds in itself the key to all mental hygiene, practical wisdom, and morals. It throws new light on the relations between mind and conduct—as will be shown in a moment.

The brain regulates energies in two ways. It may, first of all, contain in itself mechanisms for generating power; or it may, secondly, contain mechanisms for utilizing energy to its utmost and, incidentally, checking waste. The cortex of man's brain exhibits both mechanisms clearly.

THE BRAIN AIDS ENORMOUSLY IN GENERATING ENERGY THROUGH ITS CONNECTIONS WITH THE ENDOCRINE GLANDS. IT RELATES INCOMING STIMULI TO APPETITES AND AVERSIONS: THUS A NEW INNER STIMULUS IS CREATED. RELATIVE TO THE POWER NEEDED FOR A GIVEN ACT, MAN GENERATES MORE THAN ANY OTHER ANIMAL.

SECONDLY, TREMENDOUS ECONOMIES ARE BROUGHT ABOUT BY THE ASSOCIATIVE TRACTS OF THE BRAIN. HERE REFLEXES AND HABIT RESPONSES ARE INHIBITED, WHENEVER THEY PROMISE TO GIVE UNSATISFACTORY RESULTS. RELATIVE TO THE NUMBER AND VARIETY OF STIMULI FLOWING IN ON HIM, MAN USES LESS ENERGY THAN ANY OTHER ANIMAL. WHERE A LESS WELL-ENDOWED CREATURE DEALS WITH A SITUATION BY "TRIAL AND ERROR," MAN

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REFRAINS FROM MUCH ACTIVITY AND DEVISES AN INNER PATTERN WHICH HE CALLS A "THOUGHT" OR A "PLAN" OR A "THEORY." THIS ACT CONSUMES AN INCONCEIVABLY SMALL AMOUNT OF ENERGY. AS SOON AS THIS "IDEA" SEEMS WORKABLE, MAN "AMPLIFIES IT" THROUGH A SERIES OF STEP-UP TRANSFORMERS WHICH DISCHARGE THEIR CURRENTS INTO HIS MUSCLES.

Get the main point, please! What we call "thinking" or "reflecting" or "musing" over a problem is, as a matter of biology, nothing more or less than a labor-saving mechanism of incredibly vast efficiency. A rat runs himself ragged trying to get out of a trick cage. With one-tenth of the energy he thus squanders an ape will find how to get out of the same cage. And a man will succeed with one-tenth of the ape's effort. The human brain is a mighty system of delicate governors, amplifiers, transformers, switches, reducers, fuses, all of which work so as to spread man's natural energies over the longest time and over the greatest number of affairs.

Though we have been speaking of species, probably the same principles hold true, with qualifications, of individuals. Don't expect a man with a big head to live a century and another with a small one to die young. Many minor factors intervene to blur the contrast

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here. But, in spite of this, it has been clearly demonstrated that intellectually superior people live longer than inferior.

At birth the expectation of life is fifty-five years. The median age attained is sixty-three. But the average age of American presidents is seventy-six, while an astonishing percentage of authors, scientists, college professors, and other outstanding types live far beyond the median sixty-three years. On the other hand, Raymond Pearl has shown, in his enlightening analysis of 132 occupational groups in England, that, AFTER FORTY, BUT NOT BEFORE, WORKERS DIE OFF IN DIRECT RELATION TO THE STRENUOUSITY OF THEIR JOBS. Unskilled toilers engaged in severe physical labor die first, while the highly skilled employed in tasks calling for more brain than brawn survive longest. To seize the full meaning of this, you must know one further fact: that is the natural selection of workers that is always going on, leading good minds into work requiring good minds and simple fellows into work requiring little thought but much muscle. Everywhere the unskilled worker scores much lower in intelligence tests than the semiskilled; everywhere the semiskilled scores lower than the skilled; everywhere the skilled worker scores lower than the superior business man: everywhere the superior business man

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scores lower than the professional man. Fools die young. Best Minds may not grow rich in cash, but they last longest and get the most out of life for the least effort. If that isn't success, what is?

So, in a fresh sense, life begins at forty. For the brain requires most of the years before forty to perfect the art of managing its body. The better the brain, the earlier it masters all the tricks of economy and accomplishment. But, be it good or bad, it requires much time, especially in these days of baffling complexity. Rare the man who makes the most of his energies by thirty. I think it highly probable that the very year which brings the first marked decline in physical energy—namely the thirty-seventh or thirty-eighth—normally lifts our practical intelligence to its final high level. As forty draws near, a man manages himself about as well as he ever can by taking thought. So he progresses in health, wealth, and happiness on a slowly dwindling fund of energy. At twenty he was frittering away a horse power on some jackass scheme. At forty he manipulates every mouse power so that it does the work of a hundred horses. So, I repeat, life begins at forty in a sense hitherto unappreciated; for then, first of all, normal people are able to get the most of what they want by spending the least of what they have in the form of vital energies.

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### *Nobodies before Forty*

There is another side to this strange story of youth and age. Many who distinguish themselves after forty seem to have been stupid, unambitious, or worse in their 'teens and twenties. Sometimes this is due to an early misdirection of energies. But quite as often it indicates slow growth. Wordsworth, as you may recall, impressed his associates during college years as ordinary; and, after his schooling was ended, he frittered away several years in seeming fruitlessness, while his family complained bitterly of the youth's lack of aim, grasp, and interests. In the early lines of "The Prelude," he thus describes himself:

Bent overmuch on superficial things;  
Pampering myself with meagre novelties,  
Of color and proportion; to the moods  
Of time and season, to the moral power,  
The affections, and the spirit of the place  
Insensible.

The annals of the great are filled with tales of dull youth blossoming late.

The diploma which Henrik Ibsen received from the Christiania high school represented the lowest grades which would admit of graduation. Even his marks in the Norwegian language indicated only average ability. We should expect some distinction in the linguistic powers of a



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youth destined to write extraordinary dramas; but we err in this, as we err in expecting much of the little girl Harriet Martineau, who was unable to write or think well in any school subjects.

Linnaeus' gymnasium director wanted him to be a cobbler, telling his father that he was unfit for a learned profession. Charles Darwin was "singularly incapable of mastering any language" and was considered by all his masters and his father to be a very ordinary boy, below the common standard in intellect. Pierre Curie, with his wife codiscoverer of radium, was so stupid in school that his parents removed him and placed him under a private tutor.

Here we see many influences at work, some of which are quite foreign to our present interest. Stupid, pig-headed parents impose upon brilliant offspring careers, and hence studies, alien to the young nature; the outcome is a seeming backwardness, of course. Again, the surroundings check free growth: an antiquated school system managed by pedants may prevent the young learner from showing his larger abilities until long after school days. Thus with Linnaeus and Darwin. But cases like Ibsen's and Curie's cannot be thus explained. Rather do they reveal the old, old law of "easy come, easy go." They show that mushrooms do not turn into oaks, nor oaks sprout like mushrooms.

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Many able people, like many geniuses, blossom late. Every art and science can exhibit a wealth of instances here. Titian was of no consequence whatsoever until past forty, but he improved up to seventy and worked hard until ninety. Joseph Conrad put forth his first successful writing when thirty-nine. Our own Hergesheimer arrived late in like manner, and so too has many another. The slow-growing human is one regular and normal variety; and, broadly put, the slower the maturation, the longer will life after forty prove fertile and joyous.

At forty, Al Smith was a faithful Tammany toiler, serving at Albany as speaker of the Assembly. Known chiefly as a clever young man of promise, he then gave not the slightest sign of maturing into the man he became some ten years later. Al Smith began to live in the larger way long after forty.

At forty, Herbert Hoover was a promoter looking around for something to do in London. He was, in terms of later years, a nobody. By the merest chance he was picked to head the American relief work as the World War broke out. Then life began for him.

At forty, Owen D. Young was just a hard-working lawyer in charge of the legal affairs of his company. There were twenty-five thousand others like him; and if he stood forth in this

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array with genuine distinction, nobody knew it at the time. Nor for many years later.

At forty, a strenuous but little-known professor of philosophy and education was promoted to the presidency of Columbia University, and then life began for Nicholas Murray Butler—and it is still expanding after seventy.

At forty, Michael Pupin was merely an adjunct professor of mechanics; all of his significant achievements lay in the future. He was just one of many thousand good college instructors, not the man who revolutionized long-distance communications.

At forty, the chief statistician of the American Telephone and Telegraph Company rose to its presidency; and life began for Walter Gifford.

At forty, Thomas W. Lamont was still serving as a vice-president of the First National Bank; one year later he became a member of the house of Morgan, and then life began for him in a large fashion.

At forty, in brief, most men have not yet arrived and have not yet found themselves fully. The ablest are just coming into power and self-understanding. But even for them the peak of achievement is still more than seven years away. Then and not until then do they know themselves and what they can do. Not until then does the world take their measure and give them their

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due rank. Not until then, in the complete sense, can they truthfully say they know how to live.

So, while fools die young, superior people learn to live late. As for the average citizen, he goes on working, colorless and inert, neither a joy to himself nor a burden to anybody else. Neither he nor the fool will read these pages, so we may safely blurt the truth about them both. Just as freedom is only for the free, and power for the powerful, so with living: life begins at forty for those who have something to live for and in and by. For the empty, it is a void. For the stupid, it is a stupidity. For the weak, it is a conscious death. But for the vigorous and the vivid, it is the end of an overture and the beginning of still greater music.

So we come at length to a pleasant thought. One of the richest rewards of life after forty is the infrequency of fools. The silliest, the stupidest, the most vicious, and the most reckless of your generation have, ere this meridian is crossed, gone the way of the worm. Your company embraces a steadily growing majority of sensible, substantial, enterprising, shrewd, healthy, and generally prosperous people. So, if you are lucky enough to cross forty, you draw an extra dividend on the investment of your days in the form of more charming associates.

And now, after a brief digression, we return to

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our central issue. How use our assets after forty? How pay off our liabilities best? What sort of work? What sort of play? Which business suits the man and woman turned forty? What is their wisest use of leisure?

### *Five Levels of Energy*

Success, so far as it is not mere luck, depends on two things in you: your free energy and the skill with which you apply it to the task at hand. Energy without skill ends in bungling. Skill without energy leads to inadequate performance. So, you see, if you wish to begin life at forty, you must settle two large personal questions first of all. You must find work and play that call for no more energy than you can afford to spend on them. Then you must train your mind, eye, and hand to the point of working and playing with ease, grace, and precision. Let's consider first of all the problem of finding the right thing to do.

Be it labor or a lark, each activity uses up a certain amount of energy in a certain order and at a certain rate, which may vary considerably from minute to minute, much as the work of a night watchman who sits around dozing for a month and then puts in an hour of high pressure, fighting off thieves or putting out a fire. Some pretty definite peak of effort is involved,

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and so too is some pace. Thousands of work patterns can be found in this modern industrial order. Among them find those that fit your powers. Naturally I cannot tell you where they are to be found, for I do not know your powers. But I can tip you off as to how you may pick and choose among the types of work you think you like.

Five levels of energy appear in five varieties of work. Pure thinking, manipulating ideas, drawing inferences, and conjuring up schemes "in one's head" burn up less of life's fuel than any other human activity. Indeed, so little is used that nobody has ever been able to measure it. You may have heard the statement that a spoonful of sugar or a single slice of bread and butter furnishes more than enough energy for thinking up and through any mental problem. Well, that's true. Perhaps the brain uses less than a thousandth of the energy in the sugar; the remainder may be consumed in incidental movements of the body such as handling a pencil or wiggling one's head while in deep thought. Anyhow, viewed as a piece of work, intellectual effort comes as close to being effortless as anything could well be.

The second level of energy is reached when the thinker expresses himself in written language. To convert ideas into words which convey them

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to readers involves more than the mere pounding of a typewriter or the pulling of a wet pen across the paper. The throat and tongue muscles work heavily in most writers. After a fashion, they talk to themselves first, then set down what they say. To be sure, the energy thus transformed is slight as measured against manual labor; but it is many hundred times greater than the energy of pure thinking, as almost any professional writer will ruefully testify.

The third level of energy is that of public speaking and acting. To a degree little realized by laymen listeners, this is hard work—often much harder than the average form of manual labor. One hour of lecturing exhausts many a robust speaker. And I might, if manners permitted, name here one of our most brilliant orators, who, after even thirty minutes of public declamation, must lie down and rest for nearly an hour. On this same level we find concert singing and operatic performance, both calling for mighty physique. Have you ever noticed the powerful frames of great singers?

The fourth level of energy appears in the handling and modeling of material things. Here we see the blacksmith forging iron on his anvil, the woodcarver chiseling on a statue, the printer setting type, the mechanic tinkering away at a decrepit automobile. The variety of exertion

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here is immense; sometimes it falls far below the level of the most strenuous public speaking, singing, and acting; thus, for instance, in the imbecile pumping of the six-day bicycle racer, who burns up his fuel nine times as fast as a man asleep. While precise calculations have never been made covering the entire range of heavy muscular work, such samples as have been taken indicate that the average runs at least three times as high as in literary labor of the second level named.

The fifth level brings us to the arduous toil of managing people, be it as individuals or as groups. Of all work this is the hardest, yet many young people fail to realize it because the work is exciting and often pleasant. But the very features of it which excite us also exhaust us. For contacts with people, particularly with those whom we must persuade or order around, touch off potent endocrine reactions that burn us up in a bright flame.

Now, as you doubtless have observed, many varieties of work include two or more of these five levels. Such will normally be more exhausting than work on any one of the levels involved. Consider the activities of the president of a huge manufacturing corporation. You cannot hold him down to any one level. He shifts about from one to another. One morning he must sit alone



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and think through a knotty problem of company policy. The next evening he must harangue an unruly board of directors. Within a week he is writing a long report on bond issues. Next we see him placating a crowd of sullen workers down in the factory. In this rapid shifting from one activity to another, he uses vastly more energy than anybody who sticks to a single mode of work; for the shift itself uses up much of his vital forces.

Now, gentle reader, find your place on these five levels! How much free energy have you to spend? Only you, aided perhaps by your family and your physicians, can answer that question. But whatever the answer, fit your choice of work and play after forty to it. And in general, keep in mind that *your level of best performance after forty will probably be at least one step below that on which you succeeded before forty*. Normally your energies would not slump much at that age. They may not slump appreciably until close to fifty. But slump they will, and it seems the better part of valor to anticipate the change and train yourself for a new and somewhat gentler mode of living.

There is one trick to be turned before you step down your strenuities in your previously favored field. Begin by cutting out the non-essentials, particularly those which tax your

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strength and consume much time. Work toward a simpler program in which, at first, all of your major activities are preserved with little or no change.

After forty, sensible people lead the Simplified Life. This must not be confused with the Simple Life, which seems to be a career of spinach and raw carrots, five miles from the nearest motion-picture theatre. The Simplified Life is one from which all striving that does not further self-realization has been skillfully purged. The indispensables receive the full force of one's energies. Not one mouse power is frittered away on the superfluous. As everybody past forty knows well, the job of growing up is largely a matter of sloughing the little desires in favor of the great. We simplify, we pull in, we concentrate on a few powerful, enduring wishes. So, even though the gross volume of energies may dwindle somewhat, we use them more efficiently. Thus we heighten our chances of success and achievement.

True, the career of the Simplified Life may seem enormously intricate and feverish to the innocent bystander. For the indispensables aimed at may evoke immense splurges of energy, while the unifying goal remains invisible to all save the striver. But such a well-organized system of desires and interests yields him enduring satisfaction.

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Sooner or later, of course, mere simplifying will not suffice. Around fifty, let us say, one's decline of free energy is almost certain to necessitate stepping down to a lower level. Often this means that new tasks and new recreations must be learned. So we are forced to master anew the Art of Learning.

Lucky the man who, long before forty, has learned how to think, to write, to speak, to make something with his hands and tools, and to handle people! He has within himself the equipment that enables him to find free outlet for his energies no matter how great or how slight these may be. Hence he can fit his work and play to his age. At forty he does not have to remodel himself. He merely eases up on whatever strains him and lets out a notch or two in other directions. He is the completely adaptable individual.

He is a man in ten thousand, is he not? How many of his kind have you met? Few, I'm sure! Most of us must learn from decade to decade. And, if we appraise ourselves shrewdly, we work down gradually from our peak of accomplishment. How should this be done? Let me illustrate with a hypothetical case which, as you will guess, is simplified for the sake of the lesson.

Archibald Oakes, at thirty-five, is general sales manager of the Uppencummin Gadget Corporation. He is earning thirty thousand a

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year: managing a staff of two hundred busy little drummers; pushing red, green, black, and white pins into a huge wall map by way of registering sales achievements of the day; thinking up new sales schemes; writing mile-long reports on the trends of the gadget market; buttonholing Congressmen to win votes for a higher tariff on double-acting and chromium-plated gadgets; delivering liquid oratory before the Association of Gadget Manufacturers at least twice a year and still more liquid but less oratorical speeches before the local advertising clubs on every second Wednesday; and so on and on and on.

Archibald, you will notice, toils on four of the five levels of activity I have described. He does not work with his hands and tools. He never goes into the gadget-burnishing department to burnish off a few gadgets just to keep his muscles in trim. He prefers the golf course and the nineteenth hole. This taxes his digestive tract hardly less than his arms and legs. What with such social affairs and his business worries, Archibald often falls behind on sleep. So, as he turns forty, his physician tells him to slow down and take better care of himself.

Archibald, being purely hypothetical, has intelligence enough to follow the advice. So his first move is to simplify without giving up any

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major activity. To this end, he cuts out most of his golf and drops tennis cold—as any man of forty who is neither a giant nor an idiot should do. One man in a thousand can play tennis through his fifties—witness William Randolph Hearst. But the rest of us must drop it early, or it will drop us with a bang. Archibald also stops eating late dinners and after-theater snacks. Dimly from his college Latin course he recalls the line: *Plures occidit gula quam gladius*. He sleeps eight full hours religiously. He reduces his after-dinner speeches from twenty to ten a year—and nobody suffers. Thus he keeps his office swinging along as usual, holds sales up to quota, and draws his thirty thousand a year—on and on until forty-five.

Now he feels the pace. So he takes the second step. Simplifying alone is not enough. He must begin edging off the fifth and highest level of energy output. He must spend himself less freely in the managing of people. This done, he may continue all of his other activities unabated for a long time. How turn the trick?

Well, he studies himself with microscopic eye and knife-edged wit. He finds that evening sessions with his superiors exhaust him most of all. The strain of being suave and diplomatic in arguing with the president and the directors seems much more severe than that of giving

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orders to underlings. He observes that this strain is considerably less if he can have it over with in the morning. So he persuades the president to end the late hours of discussion and set all meetings of this sort at eleven o'clock, just after the salesmen's conference. Half a dozen other little tasks turn out to use up Archibald's energies unduly, so all are either rearranged or done less frequently or shifted to an hour of exuberant vigor.

As he draws in, Archibald decides to make himself more useful around the gadget factory by going into the stamping department and practising with the various tools there. He also takes up vegetable gardening at his country home and finds it a most agreeable substitute for golf. Indeed, without ever so planning, he steadily tapers off his golf and lingers longer over turnips and artichokes.

With a steady eye on the coming fifties and sixties he also arranges to deliver more important public addresses on business, economics, and kindness to dumb animals. He enjoys the platform and, having a mellow baritone voice, as well as excellent taste in haberdashery, impresses most auditors favorably, especially because he never reads his remarks nor even glances down guiltily at ill-concealed notes but speaks forthrightly in smooth extempore.

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In this pleasant pursuit he is further aided by his growing mastery of the broader aspects of business and world affairs. He devotes much more time to reading serious books and to studying technical pamphlets and reports, not alone concerning the gadget industry but also touching many others. And he makes it a firm rule to write, with utmost thoughtfulness, articles for the trade journals, engineering societies, and better newspapers on whatever seems of some public interest in his business. He finds more fun in this than he had dreamed; and occasionally kicks himself for not having taken it up years sooner.

Slowly but surely he evolves a sincere theory of business, politics, trade, and social welfare. Ragged in spots, it is none the less all his own; and he grows a little every time he endeavors to clear up some obscure point in it. Thus we watch him pass his sixtieth birthday, free from all the cruel shocks of readjustment so common among people who persist in living after forty exactly as before. The nice balance between his natural fund of energy and his use of that fund keeps him healthy and happy. Oh, excellent Archibald! What a pity thou art hypothetical!

Yet not utterly a wraith of wish. I know many who are half you. Had they begun a little earlier, they might have been altogether and utterly you. It's all a matter of education, Archibald, isn't it?

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This is our moral, then. By nothing more than self-analysis and intelligent experiment anybody reaching forty can learn to live more abundantly through adjusting work and play to the natural flow of energies. So deficient is our education, however, that most of us do not think of vocations and pleasures primarily in terms of the work they impose on our muscles. We think of them rather in terms of pure fun or money or social prestige. Here is the first and gravest blunder.

Every least act, as well as the greatest, has its own peculiar volume and pattern of energy transformation or work done. It uses up therefore a certain fraction of you. Can you afford it? Is there not something else to do with that same fraction—perhaps tomorrow, perhaps five years hence—that, in the long run, will yield higher satisfaction? On which level of energy do you advance most smoothly? On which least smoothly? What sort of a calendar of calories seems to net you the highest happiness? Can you endure a full day of bossing other people? Can you live through the terrific strain of teaching a classroom of unruly children? Must you knock off at least once a week and see nobody? Does a day in a workshop freshen you or fatigue you?

Surely you can answer such questions about yourself, with a little effort. As soon as you do so, life begins. And not until then!



## *Chapter IV*

### LEARNING AFTER FORTY

“GIVE me a child until he is seven, and I care not who has him in charge after that.”

So runs the old saying, attributed to some unknown priest. It isn't quite right. I'd change only one word in it, by adding a syllable. Give me a child until he is seventy, and I care not who has him in charge after that.

I am convinced that if a child is badly handled up to the age of seventy, it is almost impossible to correct the bad emotional twists in his nature afterward. The first seventy years are by all odds the critical period. This is why our most advanced thinkers, like the good Dr. Clendening, are going in for the care and feeding of adults.

As for the first decade, it surely is the most important, but it is far from determining inexorably the next six or seven. Only the weak and the neurotic are slaves to their infancy. Of them, all that Freud, Jung, Adler, and the others record is only too accurate—though theories about the mechanisms of regressions, suppressions, and dissociations are much less reliable.

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The normal babe changes as he grows, adds new substances, develops new modes of behavior, and sloughs much of his initial nature. Many of us pass through a long series of Jekyll-and-Hyde transformations, ending up with personalities in which mere vestiges of youth survive.

At each age the individual is a distinct chemical system. A ten-year-old is by no means a mere babe elongated and thickened by time. A forty-year-old is not simply an adolescent enriched by many experiences. To suppose that time strikes no more deeply into animal nature is to remain innocent of human nature.

The rate at which a man releases energy is purely a chemical affair. His susceptibility to parasites and bacteria depends wholly upon the chemistry of his blood and tissues. Babyhood is one chemical realm, adolescence another, middle age a third, and senility a fourth. Babies succumb to diseases which leave their elders unscathed. The elders die of infections which fail to strike down the young. So, you see, life before ten is not life after forty. Original substances vanish, while new take form; and the result is utterly novel. Within the span of a normal career, we behold a kind of "emergent evolution." Life after forty is a genuinely new life. Never commit the ancient error of thinking it a sorry remnant of childhood. Purge your

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thoughts of the superstition that "the child is father of the man." Amend this quarter-truth. Say rather that the child dissolves hour by hour until only an infantile precipitate lingers in the seasoned frame.

Thanks to the aberrancies of the psychoanalysts, educators nowadays incline to see in men and women little more than the lengthening shadows of infants. The evillest blunders of our modern schools root in this heresy.

Do not believe the psychoanalysts who tell you that your adult years are spent striving to fulfill your childhood wishes. The statement is meaningless rather than false. For a normal child has, from year to year, many intense wishes. These change as he grows up. One week he sighs to be a policeman. Six months later his ideal career is that of a locomotive engineer. Before snow flies again, he faces toward the greater glory of an acrobat, then—after Santa Claus has brought him a book about Africa—he dreams of becoming a mighty hunter of rhinoceri.

Spontaneous interests die out every half year, so careful observers assure us. Then too, they do not come singly, but in small clusters. This is doubtless a manifestation of the parallel growth of all parts of the nerve and muscle system, each driving toward exercise. So, you see, it is pointless to talk about a childhood wish.

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There are hundreds of such in each child's life—save only in the freak, the madman, and a certain kind of genius.

No wish dies out entirely, as long as it has not been satisfied. So, inevitably, when you grow up and find fresh opportunities, you do something which you have been long wishing to do. If you were to find other opportunities, you would pursue other wishes and be equally satisfied.

No! When life begins after forty, opportunity comes in a new and richer form; and then each of us does something that has long since been smoldering. To speak of this as an infantile wish is—as I said—not exactly false; it is meaningless, for it is only one of a myriad, each partly rooted in childhood and each transformed over and over again through the intervening years. The primary nucleus is not a whit more important than its accretions.

Far from being dominated by baby yearnings, many people don't know what they want to do or have or be.

"So life begins at forty. Good! Then tell me what to start."

Thus speaks a certain stupid soul. He proves thereby that he has missed the spirit and the letter of this discourse. The man who begins living at forty knows what he wants to do. If he doesn't know that much, he cannot begin

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to live. For knowing what one desires is much more important than getting the desire. And, not knowing the desire, a man's first business must be to run it down. He must emulate Thoreau, who went to Walden Pond with this lucid self-commandment:

I went because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived. I did not wish to live what was not life, living is so dear; nor did I wish to practise resignation, unless it was quite necessary. I wanted to live deep and suck out all the marrow of life.

And shortly thereafter he added a thought which has sprouted in many a mind, before and after his; the same thought that filled the early Christians no less than the later quietists and Quakers; the same thought that welled up in Wordsworth when he wrote:

The world is too much with us; late and soon,  
Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers:  
Little we see in Nature that is ours; . . .

Thoreau put it thus:

Our life is frittered away in detail . . .  
I say, let your affairs be as two or three, not a hundred or a thousand; instead of a million, count half a dozen, and keep your accounts on your thumbnail.

What a pity that our high schools and colleges have never learned the lesson of Thoreau!

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All have blurred ideals. Leaders in university extension work have often complained that their colleges lack clear programs and policies of adult education. Proof of hazy organizing, say they, is found in the shocking turnover of students and the irregular attendance of those who stick at their courses. Rare the adult who completes a study program of the sort offered in our more prominent institutions. How avoid the conclusion, then, that in some manner not yet understood the whole scheme is unsound? The ablest teachers in the field take this view; and I think we may trust their judgment.

The deepest flaw in the edifice of learning runs straight across that part of the substructure which, for lack of a more precise phrase, we call "the philosophy of education." This flaw, in my opinion, has been caused by a breakdown of the old American philosophy of life. Nobody has thought himself through the new world to the point of clearing up the worthy and the shoddy. Men need a new perspective and a new mirror of nature. They need to glimpse themselves in a setting that fulfills the deepest in them. It is not enough to see themselves in space; they must see themselves in time. For the old vision of the years is awry. We order our affairs in hours, days, weeks, and years.

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What schedules we arrive at must depend on what can be done in the time at our disposal. So man's ability as related to his age must become a central problem in all life planning. Hence the theme of this little book.

Our college folks who dabble in so-called adult education are not facing realities or meeting acute issues. Study their catalogues. They are full of two kinds of courses: first, stenography, typewriting, bookkeeping, accounting, and that queer monstrosity "business English"; second, French conversation, readings in modern Italian novels, "appreciation of medieval art," and nineteenth century metaphysics. Interview the adults who attend such courses. Those in the first group frankly seek bread and butter; they wish better jobs and higher pay. For them, all too plainly, the subjects they study have nothing to do with education; they are bare dollar-chasing toil. Members of the second group are less clear. Some of them believe that they are getting "culture," while others tell you that they have always regretted that they did not go to college (or did not work while there) and now yearn to make up for the lost years. A few attend simply because they have nowhere else to go: they have seen all of the week's motion pictures, have gossiped with all their friends over the telephone, and have

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no more funds to spend in shopping; so they take a course in Something-or-Other.

Let us not blame the colleges for acceding to the insistent clamor of these two groups. Education, like soap manufacturing and garbage collecting and all other good things, is subject to the laws of supply and demand; what people seek, colleges must give. But as for offering what people need, well, that's another story! People seldom know what they need. And they grow angry if you tell them they need something they don't want. So what can the poor faculty do?

Frankly, I fear it can do very little—perhaps nothing at all. When life begins after forty, no faculty is required to dole out sweet doses of culture. As well nourish a tall oak with the droppings of canaries. If a man does not know what he needs at forty, it is vain to sell him a course. If a woman turned forty cannot appraise herself well enough to pick and choose her activities, I'm sure I couldn't be of the slightest service to her. There is no parallel between the intellectual requirements of an eighteen-year-old freshman and those of a normal person at forty. The difference is as great as between the diets of a baby and a stevedore. To imagine that some specially diluted or sweetened form of adolescent drill will toughen the adult fiber is to betray a singular ignorance of plain human nature.



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Nevertheless, this idea prevails. It is a natural part of the Delicatessen School of Pedagogy, which has long ruled many of our best teachers' colleges. The Delicatessen School maintains that its goods be superlatively dainty, well seasoned, sliced wafer-thin, prettily packaged, and sold in exceedingly small quantities. It delivers at all hours of the day and night—but charges accordingly. A customer who endeavored to buy a square meal on this basis would be a lunatic. Here we have an institution for nibblers only.

Americans nibble at learning. They nibble at discipline. They nibble at thinking. They nibble at everything and engulf nothing. They nibble a little of this and a little of that, each article of diet being separately wrapped and separately devoured. Flavor counts for more than calories; ease of digesting outweighs nutritive value. And the result? Well, contemplate American business in 1932; or American politics, or American taxes, or American cities, or American anything else you like. Across the baby face of each is written the word Vacant.

The kingdom of heaven is taken by violence, not by a telephoned order to the nearest delicatessen shop. The empire of truth may be invaded by a strong personality, never by a legion of wobbly-kneed armed only with Extension De-

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partment catalogues. After forty, learning begins at home. It is not a matter of making a living. It is living. It is not a smatter of culture. It is inner maturity.

And now perhaps you understand why Europeans shake their heads sorrowfully over our tragi-comic pseudoculture. They behold us, the highest geniuses in the art of extracting power from physical things, wasting our own personal energies at every turn. They stand dumbfounded in the presence of our schools, our clubs, our businesses, and our home life. How can people so skillful with horsepower be so stupid with soul power? Here is the indictment, in the raw.

Most Americans, before and after forty alike, spend all their energies in one or more of five major enterprises.

They struggle to grow up, usually with imperfect success, thanks to our abominable school system and its divorce from realities. Most of them are, at forty, still children in many respects. So they are still unable to live their own lives.

They scheme, secondly, for wealth or power or fame, according to the best pioneer tradition; thus they become dull grubbers whose only respite from the office grind is gained through liquor, chorus girls, and flapdoodle entertainment. Inner growth never occurs. The turtle remains all shell.

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Thirdly, as parents, they revel in dictating their children's morals and careers; or, as husbands, they neglect wives; or, as wives, they neglect husbands. Between dictating and total neglect, they find no sane middle ground; and the result is a badly managed younger generation and interminable divorce.

Fourthly, as hang-over Puritans, they dictate other people's morals and affairs, enacting endless laws, few of which are ever obeyed; arousing like-minded fanatics to violence against those whose conduct they dislike; thus producing the complete anarchy which is America of the twentieth century.

Finally, they struggle to keep up with the Joneses, to conform in every least detail, from club membership to straw hats, lest they become objects of scorn and attack by the pack of yellow dogs with which they fain would run. Thus they obliterate the last faint trace of their own personalities and thereby make impossible life after forty.

Is there any remedy? Any escape? Yes, but not an easy one. Such as it is, it is not open to fools. It demands moderate intelligence and the desire to live abundantly after forty. The learner must tackle the fundamentals. He must learn to think, to read, to talk, to write, and to observe. These will not exhaust him; as we have seen, they

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use up little energy and are therefore appropriate to early middle age. Nor is this all. Mastery of language and logic—both taken here in their broadest meaning—enormously simplify the labors of managing people. The lucid school teacher instructs her young with little effort, while the mealy-mouthed bungler of phrases and the rambling wit travel weary miles to advance an inch. The logical speaker packs into ten minutes what the windbag spills through a wheezy hour. Thus on all the higher levels of work. He who has subdued the fundamentals travels a smooth road. With a given quantum of energy he accomplishes ten times more than the man who commands his speech and thoughts about as well as the average college graduate.

I would go even further. To live is, among other things, to respond effectively to all that we see and hear; it is also to induce responses in others who interest us. (Didn't somebody once say that man is a social creature?) Well, then; over and above the private utility of efficient behavior, is there not the sheer joy of clarity? Is it not a good thing to know what's what? To see through crystal, not through murk?

A man has not learned to live until, among other accomplishments, he can say what he wants to say—or, having nothing to say, can keep quiet. How few of us seem to have grown

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up in this respect! Even the telegraph companies bear witness to this grave charge. Have you ever laughed yourself sore over their stereotyped messages of greeting for Christmas and New Year's Day? Well, look again at these sorry missives and shed one kindly tear over the stunted minds who send them.

Here is a specimen. The telegraph blank contains sixteen forms, all like these: "Merry Christmas. I hope you did not forget to hang up your stocking." Or: "Good bye, Old Year, hello New! May all its troubles go right by you!" Opposite each form message, is an empty square which symbolizes the sender and also serves as a place to check his selection. There he marks an x, then pays his price, and the deed is done. The telegraph company wires the address of the receiver, together with a key number showing which of the sixteen great thoughts is to be conveyed, and the misdeed is done.

Here we have, in its stark and ugly nakedness the wordless, thoughtless adult. Were his number not legion, the telegraph companies could not continue to exploit these preposterous form messages. So long as the species is absorbed with mere livelihood, it will be content to stumble along with crippled minds. But after forty, when leisure and let-down come, what will such creatures do? So far as I can imagine their

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inwardness, they must feel like half-blind animals in a trap.

When Utopia arrives, its schools will be so managed that every child is drilled to think as hard and as much as possible. This will, in many ways, serve to prolong his life as well as to make him healthier and happier. But its noblest outcome will appear after the learner has passed forty. For then he will find it easy and pleasant to step down his energy output apace with the natural deceleration of his body.

He will likewise be taught to use his native language with such skill in both speech and writing that, at forty, he can begin to serve as an adviser rather than as a heavy toiler in his special field. Only through such intensive training will he come to think clearly and express himself convincingly.

Our American schools are not within hailing distance of Utopia. Failing completely to improve the thinking and the language of pupils, they fail to prepare for life after forty. The wretched failure of so many of our middle-aged people must in no slight measure be charged against their teachers. To correct this evil, a revolution must come. The teachers themselves are exhausted long before forty; for they toil on the highest level of energy as they manage the boisterous young—perhaps the hardest of all

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familiar jobs. A good school can never arise from exhausted instructors.

With bad early training, of course, we are lucky if we ever strike our pace. And those of us who finally overcome the inbred handicaps of our schooling enjoy a victory that is all too short.

"If life begins at forty, then most of us have only fifteen or sixteen years to live."

This was hurled at me by one sincere dispenser of gloom, who went on to cite, with deadly accuracy, statistics showing that most Americans die in their mid-fifties.

A bitter thought, isn't it? But I think most physicians and psychologists will agree with me that AMERICANS DIE YOUNG LARGELY BECAUSE THEY NEVER START LIVING. Our silly dollar-chasing and our greasy grind of factory and our stupid philosophies of life all carry over into the middle years the tempo and thrust of youth. The regular trick of the big business organization is to fill young men with rosy dreams of swift promotion and wealth; to drive them to the limit as junior executives or as foremen; and then to trust to dull human nature to hold the pace as a matter of habit.

After thirty-seven, Americans die off much faster than other people. Their kidneys, hearts, and blood vessels give way, as a rule. By fifty-five, the death rate is shocking. If, having abused

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themselves until their fortieth birthdays, they are seized with the typical panic of oncoming middle age and try to begin living, they may succeed; but they will probably pass from the scene in their late fifties; for the deeper damage to body and spirit has been done.

If you wish to begin living after forty and to keep on living until threescore and ten, you must start planning at ten. This is a platitude of such green antiquity that I am ashamed to echo it here; but it must enter our records. Start right, and forty will be high noon. You will live to eighty, hale and hearty—barring accidents and bad ancestors.

### *A Young Man's World?*

“This is a young man's world.”

How often you hear that remark! The records of genius are scoured to show how great men struck their stride in their twenties and reached fame long before forty. And then you wonder what's the use of striving after forty.

But most of these stories are true only of certain varieties of achievement. Poets, painters, orators, and a few kinds of scientists and inventors do come to full flower while young. But nine-tenths of the world's best work has been done by older people. And thus it will always be.



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What are the greatest assets of youth? Fire, energy, passion, and intense feeling. Wherever these traits improve the quality or the amount of work, youth has the advantage. But youth is handicapped in every high endeavor which demands experience, seasoned judgment, a wide circle of influential friends, caution, and patience.

The simpler the job, the earlier one masters it. Youths succeed brilliantly in easy work, of course. It would be a sad world if they didn't. Work that depends mostly on imagination or sheer exuberant energy is done magnificently in the second and third decades of life. Work requiring precise understanding of men and affairs, as well as of the physical world, is seldom mastered until after forty.

Success comes later and later in our world. Few men are earning up to their full powers until forty or later. Among men destined to cross the \$5,000 line of incomes, comparatively few do so until forty. College professors, scientists, clergymen, and lawyers seldom do. Engineers improve with age to an astonishing degree, as the exhaustive research summed up in the 1930 Chart Book of the American Society of Mechanical Engineers Committee on Economic Status shows. Mechanical engineers, for example, earn more and more up to the age of fifty-five years. By then the median salary is about

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\$7,500. The ablest 10 per cent of these same engineers, however, continue to increase their earnings steadily up to the age of sixty, when *all* of them who are still practising are taking in more than \$25,000 a year. The poorest 10 per cent of the profession reach peak earning around forty-five, when they are making about \$3,500 a year.

Young people must spend more time in training for careers; then they must linger longer in subordinate posts. Things are going here as in the Old World; men arrive in early middle age, as a rule. Thorndike has found that the average age at which men of indubitable greatness have produced their masterpieces is 47.4 years. No fewer than 331 eminent men of all kinds were checked up in his inquiry; but the types of achievement were not segregated, hence the significant correlation between the specific work and age does not appear. Thorndike does, however, throw light on the broader question we have been considering; and his answer is essentially the same as ours.

Achievement in many lines begins well before forty; but, as I have shown elsewhere,<sup>1</sup> by far the greater number of highly significant creative and constructive acts will be found on the shady side of that milestone. A few fields are nearly

<sup>1</sup> "Psychology of Achievement," pp. 201 ff., New York, 1930.

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monopolized by young men, notably medical research; and this is the chief reason for the much misquoted remark of Dr. William Osler that "the effective, moving, vitalizing work of the world is done between the ages of twenty-five and forty." Lyric poetry is a game of youth, too, as you might well expect. Likewise with lyric music like the songs of Schubert, Mozart, and Schumann. Light fiction flows often from juvenile pens—but ought we to call it an achievement or a business?

With these four varieties, however, the list ends abruptly. The larger and the richer triumphs begin with graying hair. Handel wrote "The Messiah" when fifty-six, and Bach the "Saint Matthew Passion" at forty-four. Haydn's best works all came after fifty, and his "Creation" was done at sixty-seven. Beethoven improved with every passing year; his most wonderful melodies came between forty-five and fifty-seven. Wagner's "Tristan and Isolde" came at forty-six and "Parsifal" at sixty-nine. In painting, Leonardo did Mona Lisa at fifty-four, while Rembrandt's five or six greatest canvases were conjured after fifty. Frans Hals did some of his loveliest things after seventy, while Michelangelo's most tremendous conceptions were projected into paint between his fifty-ninth and eighty-ninth years. Up to his

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thirty-seventh year that supreme artist Goya painted nothing of consequence, according to his biographers. Then came spasms of ill health and a prodigious outburst of creative genius which steadily improved through his forties, then through his fifties, and then through his sixties, and did not deteriorate much until well into his seventies. At seventy-two he etched thirty-three extraordinary plates depicting scenes in the bull ring and painted, besides these, a score of portraits. Thus in almost every major field of endeavor the same congregation of elders confronts you.

So much for outstanding accomplishments. But how about ordinary work? Aren't things quite different there? Once upon a time, yes. Today, no. Let's go clean to the other end of the success ladder by way of proving our point. Let me tell you a case from real life—one, furthermore, which can be matched by thousands of others.

The place, in Denver, is one of the most remarkable schools in all the world. Our heroine is an aged black woman. (Or is it Emily Griffith? Settle that for yourself!)

"I'se a wash-woman," she said to Miss Griffith. "I'se done washed clo'es all my life. But now—" She spread out her hands. They were bent and twisted with rheumatism. "I cain't wash no mo'. I wants to come down hyeh

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an' study. There's sumpin' I'se always wanted to be. I wants it mo'—" her kind old black face lit up—"mo' than anything in the worl'!"

Principal and newest pupil, they stood together in the hall of the Denver Public Opportunity School—open from nine in the morning till nine at night—with students from eight years old to eighty—where you can learn anything you want to know, provided only that it helps you to make a living.

"Yes?" said Miss Griffith, "We'll help you if we can. What do you want to be?"

And her heart dropped a couple of hundred feet when the old colored woman said, watching her with earnest eyes:

"A milliner."

Miss Griffith had had them white and black and red and brown and yellow and all the shades between; she had had them moronic and sub-moronic; she had seen that they got taught things that she herself had never heard of; she was used to miracles; but this stumped her.

"But," she says when she tells about it, "I learned long ago not to tell them, 'You can't.' How do I know they can't?"

She took the old colored woman to the millinery class.

"Do what you can," she said to the teacher, who is the head, by day, of the millinery depart-

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ment of one of Denver's smartest stores. "Have a special eye on her. She's got to try if she wants to. Maybe it will lead to something else."

She was afraid to go back and see what it led to. She thought of the frightful color combinations those crude and untrained eyes would select, the havoc those stiff and bent old fingers would make with ribbons and bows and delicate feathers and gewgaws. But when she couldn't put it off any longer, she went, and learned something.

You see, there are hats and hats. The hat the old colored woman had made was a deaconess' bonnet. A plain, substantial, black and white deaconess' bonnet, with small, strong stitches beautifully set. The fading eyes and bent fingers had proved adequate.

AND—it was the first of a long and honorable line. The old woman never returned to the wash-tub. She built up an excellent business in deaconesses' bonnets instead, and obtained, I believe, a sort of corner on the market.

And Emily Griffith still believes in not telling them they can't. "How do I know they can't?" she says.

That question is echoed by every psychologist and by every personnel manager today. Skill in modern work is acquired fast and surely by people of all ages, provided only that the

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learners themselves do not build up an inner resistance. Let us glance at this bad trait, for it plays a part in thwarting life at forty.

The transfer of skill is sadly hampered by emotions and hardened attitudes toward one's work. We can teach an old dog new tricks provided the old dog takes an interest in this accomplishment. But usually he will not. And this brings us up against one of the most vexatious of all industrial problems, the hatred and fear of any change which involves a man's deepest behavior patterns.

Ever since the Industrial Revolution began this emotional resistance to change of occupation has retarded progress and caused endless mischief. But we have usually seen it in a guise which obscures its nature somewhat. The hand weaver fights the introduction of the power loom. The glass blower devotes his life to blocking the use of modern glass-making machines. We usually say, when we observe such battles, that these poor devils are fighting to hold their jobs. It is the endless battle for self-preservation. And so it is, in intent. But it is not so in fact.

It is rather a blend of two powerful trends; first, a genuine fear that, if one's old job vanishes, there will be no new one to take its place; and, secondly, a vague, dull, obstinate antipathy toward doing something different. Unfortu-

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nately, in thousands of cases, the fear was well grounded; and men did sink into poverty after the new inventions came in. In other thousands, also, various circumstances combined to make difficult the readjustment to new kinds of work, thus aiding and abetting the antipathy. But wherever we can detach good workers and fairly favorable circumstances from the welter of poor workers and irremediable adversities, we find that the competent and the ambitious can transfer their skill to new lines of industry with no grave struggle except the incidental but very real one of tiding themselves over a period of unemployment between the old jobs and the new. True, it has been this interim of starvation which has justly terrified workers and perplexed employers who would avoid its horrors. But a more elastic, forward-looking attitude on the part of all concerned would in most cases have shortened and mitigated that evil span.

One lesson seems to emerge. Young people ought to be trained to expect and to be prepared for such sudden changes of work. They should be drilled in transferring their skill. And this means that they should learn several jobs simultaneously. The older vocational policy of drilling youth in a single field no longer is sound. Indeed, it is suicidal. The age clamors for versatile workers, for each job tends to fill only



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part of a man's time and to demand only a small fraction of his abilities. In former ages men were subordinate to their jobs and their employers. Today they begin to break loose. And the older they are, the freer they become.

After forty, you can put your job in its place and refuse to subordinate yourself to it. Among the thousands of vocations wherein toilers earn bread and butter scarcely more than one in a hundred offers any opportunity as an outlet for the broader and higher abilities. Do you think this is a loose generalization? Then please do just two things, as I have done. Run through the long list of "gainful occupations" published by the Census Bureau, noting the numbers in each. Then visit shops and factories where men and women are thus gainfully employed and watch what they do in the course of a typical day. That's all!

At the bottom of the economic scale, the drudgery is manifest and unanswerable. More than a million miners hack away at rock and coal seams year in and year out: no chance there for self-realization, is there? More than four million farm hands clean out stables, kill pigs, pluck chickens for the day's stew, and hoe up and down miles of corn under a blazing sun some twelve to fourteen hours a day. What sort of a personality can express itself adequately through

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such activities? Nearly four million clerks spend their time selling shoe strings and corkscrews and corsets and tin whistles and electric flatirons and the like. Another five million, mostly women, are domestic servants, collecting slops, making beds, washing windows, and beating rugs. A great way of expanding and enriching one's finer nature! More than fourteen million more toil in steel mills, around blast furnaces, in automobile factories, and wherever else machines grind out goods faster than people can use goods. A few thousand here are lucky; they are the rare inventive spirits who conjure up better machines as they study those on which they work. Next we come to four million switchmen, brakemen, conductors, firemen, engineers, and clerks in the railways and motor-truck lines; nearly all of these have monotonous duties that are, in the main, so simple that a year of training suffices to make the worker expert. Then come the firemen, policemen, letter carriers, postal clerks, assistants in government offices of all sorts, the carpenters, masons, plumbers, painters, lathers, stone cutters, and similar skilled laborers, among whom conceivably 1 per cent or 2 per cent find occasional opportunities for some creative work as well as for aesthetic enjoyment of a sort on their jobs.

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Even within the professions, the volume of dull routine, simple tasks, and dead-end jobs is amazingly great. Drop in on any of our million school teachers, librarians, pharmacists, and other border-line professionals; the picture is much the same as among the carpenters and masons. So too among most junior executives and salesmen, of whom there are more than a million. Not until you move upward to that thin, pure air of the scientist's laboratory, the college professor's lecture room, the operating room of the surgeon, and the magnificent paneled suite of the senior executive, do you find ample outlets for the superior minds there at work.

So, out of 48,832,589 Americans gainfully employed, you are not going to find more than one or two million who can develop themselves in and through their bread-and-butter jobs. Tomorrow still fewer will be able to do so, for the inevitable trend is toward more machines and simpler subdividing of tasks.

Thus work grows more and more trivial as a way of life. It is becoming exactly what it should be, merely a way of making a living. As men learn this, they disillusion themselves. A few more years, and the Gospel of Work will have joined astrology and palmistry; it will be no more than the after-stench of rotten quackery.

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But young people will still have to devote their best energies to jobs, simply because they must get ahead in the world as fast as possible, so that they may begin to live at forty. As older men and women take work less seriously, the young must take it more seriously—but in a manner distinct from the present custom.

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“You are old, Father William,” the young man said,  
“And your hair has become very white;  
And yet you incessantly stand on your head—  
Do you think, at your age, it is right?”

“In my youth,” Father William replied to his son,  
“I feared it might injure the brain;  
But, now that I’m perfectly sure I have none,  
Why, I do it again and again.”

## *Chapter V*

### PLAY AFTER FORTY

FATHER WILLIAM is blood brother of your old Uncle Sam. Uncle Sam's entire family incessantly stand on their heads when they try to play after forty. They turn work into false play and play into false work. Their whole art of living is topsy-turvy. It is poisoned with all of the Million American Myths, such as the ideas that "time is money," "happiness is found only in service," "a man finds his highest self-realization in his work," and "it's dangerous to let down after forty."

I shall not bore you with diatribes against such notions. But a few remarks must be passed, in an unkind spirit, so that we may gain a clearer view of play after forty. And, first of all, let us look at the old idea that "time is money."

Of all the stupid adages which clutter the copybooks, the stupidest is the one which says that "time is money." It is the blackest lie ever mouthed. Time isn't money. It never can be reduced to money. It is the dimension within which money is created and used. Yes, and even

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more: time is life—or, at least, the essence of living.

Everybody comes into the world with a certain chance of acquiring a working capital of a round half million. Half million what? Half million hours, of course. They will be on hand, ready for investment, as fast as the new-born promoter crawls from his cradle and toddles forth to meet the dawn. They will be paid in full if he is skillful enough and lucky enough to stick around until he turns the mossy corner of three score years and ten.

He cannot give away his minutes. He cannot borrow minutes from a friend. He cannot steal minutes. Money is a mere medium of exchange. Time is neither a medium nor is it exchangeable. It is the inmost stuff of life itself.

On this whole subject wiser words have never been spoken than by the anonymous writer on "The Penny and the Gingerbread."<sup>1</sup> Harken to him:

The solution of the personal money question lies neither in saving nor in not saving; the true solution is to forget money utterly and to concentrate all one's thought and energy upon the wise spending of time, upon that chosen work which seems interesting and important regardless of reward . . . If the spending of time is handled with common sense, the smaller problem—the money question—which is inescapably involved in it, will be settled at the same moment.

<sup>1</sup> An article in *Harper's*, October, 1928.

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Any simpleton can save up his dollars, but the wisest of men cannot save up opportunities—they must be used as they come.

Quixotic though this sounds, the writer proves his point out of his own career, as far as a single case can prove anything. I come to his rescue with more cases. I know several people—at a shot, I'd say at least ten and maybe fifteen—who have succeeded marvelously by making it an inflexible rule to think first of time and only incidentally of money.

The richest man I have ever known has, so far as I can testify, never had more than five hundred dollars to his name at any one time. He has always done what he wanted to do. But he has never acted on impulse. He has minutely and deliberately studied out a program of time spending for one or two years ahead. He has weighed all of his interest as scrupulously as a pawnbroker weighs a diamond brought in for hocking. Having settled upon the end, he next attacks ways and means. So, in the course of this analysis, he arrives at the matter of costs. No miser has ever calculated to the remoter decimal points with more skill than he. Yet he has no interest in money.

Several times he has been penniless and has slept in sailors' lodging houses for a few nights. But his troubles are quickly over, chiefly because



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he has mastered all the arts of getting what he truly craves. And he never works an hour more than necessary. Thanks to his skill in organizing his life, his days are seldom cluttered with tasks for which he has no taste.

"Not one man in a thousand can afford to knock off at forty and enjoy himself for the rest of his days."

So spoke a listener while we were once discussing our subject. Who would quarrel with him? Not I. Life begins at forty, whether you go on working or not. I don't maintain that a man can truly live only by giving up bread-and-butter toil; all history refutes such an absurdity. But I do say that after forty a man is best able to put his job in its place.

Man rises above his labors at last. This is the triumph of the new era. True, a triumph not yet completed, but well on its way, working—as ever—from the top downward. Most Americans still lack a philosophy of life that fits their place and time. They cling to the faded shreds of a pioneer outlook in which harsh toil, ceaseless striving, overshrewdness, animal cunning, and crude piety blend badly. A few hold with us that we need be little concerned with man and his jobs. For, as we shall repeat until you weary of it, the job is but a small corner in the house of life. True, the art of living embraces it and must

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harmonize its problems with the larger interests of personality; but few of us find bread-and-butter work that affords an outlet to such interests, and perhaps still fewer will do so in the future.

The art of living seldom centers around the job. It does so only for artists, philosophers, scientists, and a few other lucky fellows. Out of every hundred jobs in the world, probably ninety-eight tap a mere trickle of the workers' energies and give vent to their dominant energies. For most of us, jobs aren't life. They're only a tiny phase of it. As Leonardo pointed out centuries ago, no man is so big a fool that he cannot succeed in one thing, if he persists in it. But versatility in the art of living requires the skill and experience that come only with maturity and the perspective of early middle age.

Organize your work so that you can run away from it for days at a stretch. This calls for clear thinking and a firm will. Above all, you must rid yourself of sentimentality. Emancipating yourself so that you are free to master the art of living is largely the reward of character. It is a matter of self-insight, self-planning, and self-control.

Arnold Bennett showed us how to live on twenty-four hours a day. I have often wished that he had written a supplement to his charming

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and wise book on that subject; he should have gone on to teach the world how to live on twenty-five thousand days per lifetime. That's the big order!

Did any mortal ever budget his entire career? I'm sure that never happened. Some may have had their lives budgeted for them—but that's stark tragedy, nothing less. As for self-budgeting, I'm sure nobody has ever known himself well enough to do a decent job in this super-art. We all change from year to year. We cannot move long on any one level. We crave variety—and the most exciting variety comes only with a stiff dose of the unexpected. Adventure cannot be melted down to a formula. As long as life remains as now, largely a gamble, how hopeless the dream of laying out a neat plan for seventy years of pleasant living! Or even a program for five years!

Nevertheless, the idea may be roughed in and partly realized, but not until you are well settled—let us say, at a guess, some time in your mid-thirties or early forties. You may start pondering it around twenty. Think of yourself as having fifty more years to go. See the problem as clearly as if it were one in engineering. (It is largely that—a matter of human engineering.) There are precisely 60 minutes in an hour, 24 hours in a day, and you know the rest. Allow

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8 hours a night for sleep, 7 hours a day for work, with half of Saturday off. Allow whatever you need for dressing and undressing, for cleaning your teeth, for shaving, for opening your mail and answering routine letters, and for the other unavoids of modern existence which seldom add joy to life. What remains? About 2,500 hours a year for all the good things other than necessities. That's an average, of course. A few hapless souls may squeeze fewer than 2,000 hours out of the circle of the calendar, while the lucky may get 3,000 or more. But let's ignore all such. Let's ask how much the average man and woman can engineer out of those 2,500 hours of yearly freedom.

Lump together in one sticky mass all kinds of pleasures, from chewing a stick of gum up to parachute jumping. Each averages about fifteen minutes of satisfaction. To live at one's best, then, one ought to have some ten thousand distinct experiences of satisfaction annually, over and above the elemental satisfactions of sleeping and eating and working. In half a century, half a million joys! Which things will fill these periods? That's an engineering problem, I repeat. It's an intricate trick of measuring and weighing energy output, minutes, and relative values. Above all it requires immense skill in sensing and apportioning time.

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Do you doubt this? Then test yourself. It's easy. When you arise, some morning, start checking up on your day. Years ago, a government clerk in Washington did this and produced, quite unwittingly, a comical but somewhat valuable document of human joys and sorrows. He tried to measure the fun he got out of the hours, minute by minute. Probably he failed to enter on the books the best fun of all, which was analyzing himself thus. Do you find it so?

The measure of a man is his sense of time. To a hungry babe, an hour is an eternity. To the boy kept after school, a minute is longer than an old man's day. To the young man, many a month is a heartbreaking year. In this awareness of time enter many factors, such as great expectations, impatience, urge, and perspective. While we await a desired event, how slow the seconds! Youth, awaiting everything good, is fairly crushed under the standstill calendar. Age, awaiting little beyond what any hour may bring, sees in the hours a swiftly running river. Appetite produces the same contrast. Fierce in the young, it accelerates time by slowing down events in time. Gentle in the old, it reverses this process. Likewise with the perspective that comes only through experience. The child's universe is bounded only by the moment's craving. The

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mature man sees his ambitions as an episode in a generation.

Now, is it not plain that well-organized living is impossible within the narrowed perspective of any ferocious libido? The basis of effective thinking is the delayed response. "Stop, look, listen!"—this is the beginning of wisdom.

## Chapter VI

### BUSY LEISURE

LEISURE in the Old World is practised mainly as an integral phase of ancient culture whose deepest trend is toward reflective contemplation and aesthetic enjoyment. Philosophy arises from its contemplation, while sensory hedonism flows from its aesthetic aspect. Probably this cultural variety of leisure has resulted from a host of interweaving factors, such as climate, alcohol, slavery, caste, and man's incompetence in dealing with nature. Yet its charm holds many a traveler seduced and enchanted—even our own busy countrymen.

Why do so many Americans love France? Why do so many good Americans still go to Paris, as if to heaven? The answer is easy: the French, centuries ago, mastered in one form the great art of living. This indeed is their ultimate glory. This is, after all has been said in praise and in blame, their chief gift to the modern world. From the poorest old *concierge* on the cobbled steeps of Montmartre up to the dingy dukes of the grandiose but moldy *châteaux* of

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the provinces, these Gauls know how to squeeze the syrup of joy out of the lazy hours. And how to sip it, too!

To the American of high Babbitry, the French fritter away their lives shockingly. They devote a whole morning to suave haggling over the sale of a second-hand automobile. But they haggle around an iron table on which stand at least three bottles. The table is in the shadow of a horse-chestnut tree at whose foot sits a newsboy reading the papers he should, according to the best American gospel, be selling at the top of his lungs. As a first act to the drama of the second-hand car, the party discusses the latest movements of the Japanese in Manchuria. Nobody knows anything about these, but everybody talks at great length none the less. Then comes a parley over the quality of fishing up the Seine, a brief period of mourning over the inferior grapes of Médoc, and finally—as noon draws nigh—somebody mentions the car.

Remarks that acute journalist, Friedrich Sieburg, after many years in France: "Give the progressive European a piece of string, and he will not rest till he has made something useful out of it; give it to a Frenchman, and he will sooner or later turn it into a fishing-line." *Touché!* The Frenchman does not confuse living with making a living—thereby proving himself



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superior to the progressive Europeans and the Americans in one of the most important affairs of human existence. He understands that, in the life of reason, it is a platitude that men work only for the sake of enjoying life. He who toils for anything else is a fool.

Now, the Old World type of life and leisure cannot be transferred bodily to America. No use of leisure, in fact, can be torn apart from the culture which bred it without degenerating into sentimentalism or foolish faddism. If we would develop an American leisure, we must allow it to grow naturally out of the American environment and the American people. Our climate is utterly distinct from Europe's, for ours is an atmosphere of champagne, enormously stimulating and much sunnier. Our drinking water, food, clothing, habits of work, and even the topography of our land mark us off from the Old World. But most of all do we differ from Europe in our feeling for time. We live in the fourth dimension. We alone look forward always, forgetting the past as rapidly as possible. We accept progress as an axiom, whereas the French look down upon it as a childish fancy. To us, activity is life. And activity simply does not harmonize with most forms of reflection and aesthetic pleasure.

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So, I think, the American ideal is Busy Leisure. It is some use of free time in which vigorous activity runs on. Rest appears in it only as a moment of relaxation which makes possible fresh activity a moment later. Some later critic may prove that this is a fatal flaw in our civilization. I am not prepared to dispute him. All I maintain is that busy leisure expresses our people as they are, in relation to our surroundings as they are. And this state of affairs must be accepted as the starting point for the educator's program of betterment. No more serious error could be committed than that of using our high schools and colleges as hothouses in which to force the growth of Old World philosophers, conversationalists, aesthetes, and poets. Nothing is at core more thoroughly unsuited to the American tempo than imitation of this leisure class.

But what would suit our tempo? This question has never been answered. To solve the problem it poses, we must begin with things as they are. How, as a matter of fact, do Americans use their free time? How do they use their extra dollars and their personal energies? The trade reports here are not pleasant, but we must accept them for what they are worth. About one-fourth of all personal incomes is spent for some leisure

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activity in the broadest sense. Almost as much is spent on pleasure travel as on education. Sports consume an astonishingly small fraction of time and money; all of them combined take barely half as much out of our pockets as we spend for music in the form of concerts, instruments, lessons, and records. Motion pictures absorb barely half as much as cosmetics and beauty-parlor services. Soft drinks and chewing gum cost us annually almost exactly as much as Hollywood. Social entertaining in all its forms ranks next to travel as an item in our national budget of leisure. And the third largest item contributory to leisure is the one and one-half billion dollars spent for luxury servants, such as valets and butlers and chauffeurs.

Nearly six billions a year go for various forms of social pleasure and its facilitation (with luxury clothes, cosmetics, social club membership fees, etc.). Next below this comes pleasure travel and boating, which run up a combined bill of about three and one-half billions. As contrasted to these two top items, all the traditional ways of leisure involve negligible spending. For instance, neither sports as a whole nor pleasure reading in all forms, nor art, nor drama can compare with the love of people and love of going places; for not one of these four has as much as half a billion a year spent on it.

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True, this comparison is inadequate. We all know that millions of hours of leisure are spent doing things which cost no money. Most Americans tend to dabble at many interests without concentrating effectively on any one; they also loaf much, talk much, and "play around with friends" a great deal. In their more or less aimless dabbling, they are encouraged by the variety of allurements—the movies, the radio, baseball, pool rooms, the corner soda fountain, newspapers, the auto, the cheap week-end round trip, the labor-union club and hall.

This rich variety constitutes one of our gravest problems. If we do not get it in hand, we are lost. Cheap pleasures always tend to drive out dear. Easy pleasures drive out hard. Simple pleasures drive out complex. The whole trend of our industrial civilization is to multiply easy, simple, cheap satisfactions. The substance of each time-killing act is squeezed out or diluted to a mere chemical trace. This is not, as some economists have supposed, due *merely* to an effort to appeal to low-grade minds and tastes; it roots in mass production and mass sales. Producers want to sell their wares to everybody, from college graduates down to morons; therefore they seek a least common denominator of appeal, and that happens to fall within the range of the low-grade person's taste, culture, power, and purse.

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Yet these cheap and unenduring satisfactions are not for the intelligent forties. They are designed and planned chiefly for our untutored and vulgarized young Americans who spend billions yearly in shoddy activities mis-called amusement and leisure-time entertainment. After forty, we endeavor to find some way of making the worth-while activities of leisure as cheap, as simple, and as easy as possible *without destroying their substance*. This, of course, our schools should long since have undertaken. But as usual, it is the mature and intelligent men and women who must find their own salvation.

How do it?

Perhaps first, travel. Travel can be one of the noblest forms of busy leisure. Usually it is stupid—a wild rush from place to place, guide-book in hand, or else a prolonged joy ride past millions of billboards. To know the world first-hand is one of the foundations of culture.

After forty, you may wander foot-loose again and make a million fresh contacts. Travel grows cheaper and cheaper. As I write these lines, ocean and rail rates are at their lowest in all history. It is literally as cheap to go around the world as to stay home. As for touring in an automobile, you can save money with a little ingenious thrift. Indeed, you can make it from coast to

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coast on less than four dollars a day for all expenses, with careful planning. How foolish to sit around like a toad on a stone, when you might as well be getting an eyeful somewhere else! The man who permits himself to be chained to his office desk misses most of the fun of life. So does the housewife who deems it her sacred duty to stick around home just as if she were the paint on the walls.

Next to travel, try reading!

Reading is the heart and soul of culture in its highest form. To open the world of good books to the eager leisure-timer, we must make reading much better than it now is. Here older people have the advantage over youth, especially in the understanding of news. Few can read the newspaper until after forty. I mean, of course, that the greater half of this art lies in the swift comprehending of backgrounds, and that no young person has had time to acquire these. Only time can paint them on the canvas of memory.

Having watched and recorded many newspaper readers, for professional reasons, I can testify that few women and fewer men make more than a beginning of the art before thirty; the abler advance fast during the third decade, and, at its close, have a grasp of the world at large which enriches everything they experience thereafter.

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As for general reading, too many of all ages read slowly and inaccurately. As a rule, Americans tend to forsake good books soon after they leave school. The book trade and library figures show this convincingly. To gain the most from the reading of history, philosophy, drama, poetry, criticism, or any other high domain whose medium of expression is language, we must double or treble reading skill. Here people over forty can improve their ability as easily as do the youngsters. I know men and women by the dozen, in age from forty to seventy, all of whom with consistent drill have greatly increased both their speed and their accuracy in reading—and consequently their enjoyment of its pleasures.

Turning now to conversation, let me cite Schopenhauer. He wrote in his "Counsels and Maxims":

Not even the highest kind of intellectual superiority will secure for a man a preponderating place in conversation until after he is forty years old. For age and experience, though they can never be a substitute for intellectual talent, may far outweigh it.

Not a man in a million under forty is worth listening to, except for gag lines and clowning. The most brilliant conversationalists I have ever known, indeed, were all over sixty-five. The mastery of the art increases with experience

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and with the organization and design into which the mature cast their lives.

Were women to take half as much pains in preparing their conversations as in fixing their hair for dinner, life would be merrier—and I'm sure there would be fewer divorces and murders. And if men would only devote one-tenth of the time to cultivating conversation that they now do to cultivating business acquaintances, I suspect that their businesses would improve in the long run. For even a stupid retailer appreciates good talk!

As for other kinds of leisure after forty, look, for instance, at Edward Miles. At fifty, he decided to begin living in the grand manner. So he wound up his business, bought a 37-foot schooner and set out from New York in 1928 to see this queer old world. A few months ago he hove in sight off Sandy Hook again, having wandered about 100,000 miles in the course of four years. He said he had spent all of his savings, to the tune of some \$30,000, seeing the world; so he would now have to find a job.

I think the best job for him is as a teacher; he can give instruction in the art of living after forty.

Then there's Carr Van Anda, former managing editor of the *New York Times* and now retired. Mr. Van Anda, now approaching seventy, has



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for many years pursued higher mathematics just for fun. He was the only journalist in or around New York City who knew what the dispatches about Einstein's relativity and Edington's and Jeans's theories of the universe were all about. Now that he has retired, he spends some of his leisure exposing the errors of distinguished college professors. A few months back he published in the scientific journals a keen analysis of the unsound calculations underlying one of the latest hypotheses about whither this old universe is drifting.

Three summers ago I ran into an old friend. He used to be in the automobile business. He became interested in artistic printing—grew tired of seeing the same old type and paper and colors in magazines, so he took up the study all by himself. He then lived in Maplewood, New Jersey. There I first saw his studio; it wasn't in the back yard, it was down cellar. We got into it through a trapdoor in the living-room floor. He had all sorts of fancy type and paper, and a little hand press. He made up his own display cards and advertisements—set the type himself, worked out his own colors, and even had special papers made. Much of his work was so good that it was used in trade publications.

Well, I lost touch with him until we met, years later. I asked him what he was doing

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with his print shop in the cellar. He grinned, said nothing, but dragged me along with him to the Belmont Hotel, where he took me up to his room and showed me half a dozen big paintings. Three of them were magnificent portraits. Remarkable color and genuinely original handling.

"So you're collecting pictures now," said I.

"Nope, Painting 'em," said he.

"How'd you come to do that?" I asked

"It was this way. Last summer the family went away to the mountains. I had to stay in town; got bored to death. Wanted something to do. Well, I happened to pass an art supply store one morning and saw a big box of paints and a lot of brushes and canvas for sale at a bargain. You know, I'd never had a paint brush in my hand—and I'm well past forty. But I had a hunch I could have some fun with one, so in I went and bought an outfit. I didn't even know how to handle turpentine and drier. I didn't know one color from another, nor anything about brushes. At first I thought I'd get a teacher—then I decided not to. Most of the fun would be in trying to work things out for myself. So I took this room and got busy. I started right in with the toughest job of all, painting portraits. The first two I did from memory—like a crazy loon. They were some-

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thing awful! I did not know how to get the colors. Then I hit on a scheme. I used to walk up and down Fifth Avenue looking at dresses in the shop windows. I'd spot one, notice its exact color, then go back to my room and try to match it. I'd daub a scrap of canvas with the color, then go back to the shop window and compare it with the dress there.

"Well, I kept plugging away and having a grand time all summer. By fall I had caught on. Then I worked on these portraits you see here. Not bad, are they?"

They weren't bad. In fact, when one great artist saw them, he said that whoever had painted them had the makings of a great painter. I think they were amazing, particularly in the light of the way they came to be made.

Experimenting and studying just for fun after forty lead to many of the most interesting ways of using leisure and of living especially suited to active Americans after forty. The amateur student and the back-yard scientist, ever keen in the pursuit of new discoveries and untried projects, can and do make their lives the envy of the luckless youngsters who must work yet awhile before they glimpse the hospitable threshold of forty. These who use their leisure to their own real interest and profit are the truly civilized—and happy—of the land.

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Happiness comes most easily after forty. Rare it is in the young save for brief flashes. During the years of expanding energy, the pressure to do and to do and to do prevents that peculiar emotional poise which underlies enduring happiness. Youth is the time of many impulses. It is the time of imperfectly organized ambitions and wild dreams. It is the time of seeking and finding, of trying and testing. All these trends make happiness difficult.

What is this thing called happiness? I have elsewhere<sup>1</sup> described it as emotional tone accompanying the self-realization of a personality. This self-realizing process is the smooth functioning of the entire organism as it carries out successfully the dominant desires of the moment. Self-realization alone is not happiness. It leads to happiness only when it is enjoyed. We must attend to it, reflect upon it, and hold it for tasting. So, you see, the precious experience has two phases, one of action and the other of rest. Both phases usually develop best in a person who combines seasoned self-insight with dexterity. Such a person understands three important matters: first of all, he knows, through long study, how all of his important desires relate to one another; secondly, he knows how his entire system of desires fits his special

<sup>1</sup> "The Psychology of Happiness," New York, 1929.

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abilities; and, finally, he knows how they can best be managed on his fund of physical and mental energy. So much for knowledge. Over and above this, the man capable of high happiness must have developed sundry dexterities suited to his wishes. If he has been ablaze with the ambition to become a brilliant pianist, he has trained his nimble fingers and has mastered sight reading of music. If he sighs to write novels, he conquers his native language and gathers notes with keen eye.

Equipped with the three kinds of knowledge and the skill appropriate to his desires, our hero may achieve success, as far as circumstances beyond his control permit that. He gets what he sets out to get. But is he happy? Not necessarily! Action is not enough. He must pause to enjoy the triumph; and, pausing, he must have it in him to enjoy. Now, there is an art of pausing—though no master seems to have reduced its technique to writing. It is an art peculiarly difficult for the young as it is peculiarly easy for people past forty.

The man of few strong wishes is likely to attain happy living much more easily than one moved by many. This is mere arithmetic. If Smith wants five things while Jones wants twenty, the odds favor Smith. He is less likely to find serious incompatibilities among his five

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wishes than Jones will among his score. Again, he is more likely to find circumstances staged for his benefit—and for the same reason that makes two aces more probable than four aces in drawing a poker hand. Then too, if Smith and Jones are blessed with the same fund of energy, Smith has a better chance of attaining his five desires than Jones has of attaining his twenty; for, you see, Smith nozzles down all of his horsepower to five spots, whereas Jones sprays his over twenty. The more hard work a goal demands, the more hazardous it is to drive toward several goals at once.

Now, the young person is a bundle of appetites and energies, few of which are well organized. In the first half of life—and to a still greater degree in the first third—it is normal to suffer a prolonged conflict of interests. We have not yet had time to discover either ourselves or the world we live in. Our wishes have not yet had a fair chance to fight it out among themselves. We confuse interests with abilities—as many school teachers still do. Precious weeks and months are squandered chasing some will-o'-the-wisp. We grow excited but seldom happy.

We learn best what absorbs us. Hazy interests or weak interests or incompatible interests make learning difficult. And this is why young people

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progress more slowly than older. They have not come out into the clear. They may think they know what they want, but they don't. So they don't know what problems to attack, which facts to master, or which habits to form. Nor can they exclude from consciousness the thousand and one fringe forces of revery. Each attack, lacking focus, weakens fast. As the attention flickers, minutes go to waste. And, ere one knows it, years have been squandered.

But this is all a part of widening one's contacts. The waste is mostly unavoidable. The wider and keener the sensitivities, the longer the young person must sample the flavors of the universe. On the other hand, the single-track mind finds itself early, moves unerringly toward its goal, and seems to excel the versatile individual in concentration. The ordinary man resembles the versatile more than the single-track mind. He has many mild interests and no strong pull in any one direction; hence he scatters his youthful energies enormously and finds himself late.

Today he is worse off than his ancestors, in this respect; for he sees, hears, feels, and touches so many more things than they. His is a bigger, more badly snarled, fluxing world. Not even a genius can quite find himself in it, and an ordinary person may spend a lifetime trying to

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assimilate it and then end up, at seventy, with a bad case of indigestion.

Once past forty, your rich experience and clearer organization of wishes enable you to know what you want and to get it with ease, grace, and precision. So you realize yourself more successfully than when you were twenty or thirty. At the same time, you are a little less strenuous and therefore more inclined to pause at the climax of each success and gloat over it. You are less eager to gulp fruits of victory and rush on to the next. What may seem to you a handicap proves to be a new asset. What you lose in forward velocity of drive you gain in depth and clarity. To strike to the deeps, you must halt and plumb. To see through the deeps, you must hold still and contemplate with care.



## *Chapter VII*

### DOES WOMAN'S LIFE BEGIN AT FORTY?

ASKS H. G. Wells: "Is there, after forty, any alternative to bridge?" And he answers thus: "At present there is no useful role for most of these women in the forties and fifties. Their old jobs, if they had jobs before marriage, do not want them back; and there are not nearly enough fresh openings."

It is only too easy to find facts in support of this dismal conclusion. Every Western land is swarming with idle women of middle age whose children have gone off to college or else to work and whose husbands have sunk deeply in the miry ruts of their own business offices. How they sit around wringing their hands, these unhappy women! How they dash hither and yon, joining clubs, signing petitions, mixing cocktails, reading best sellers, touring Europe, doing anything to flee from that boredom which is the curse of our industrial barbarism! Their frenzy and flutter reveal their total lack of education. For they live in the midst of un-

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paralleled opportunities that fairly shriek into their deaf ears and dazzle eyes not blind.

To these women I say that ten million careers lie open. In some there is fortune, in others fame, in still others calumny and social ostracism; but in all a chance to use more energy and wit and wisdom than anybody possesses. During the next thirty years America must be rebuilt from the bottom up—or else go under. Somebody must clean up our filthy cities and their filthier governments—but not by joining the Republican or Democratic party. Somebody must plan the designing and erecting of five or ten million new homes to supplant the shacks and fire traps of the profiteering era after the World War. Somebody must exterminate the prevailing high schools, boarding schools and colleges, nearly all of which prevent the spread of education. Somebody must work out plans for employing the middle-aged who have lost their jobs during the last years of the Machine Age. Somebody must devote a lifetime or two to speeding the recovery of agriculture—though heaven knows what's to be done. Somebody must educate and organize consumers so that retail prices yield only a fair profit to the middlemen and shippers, under the best possible conditions of distribution. Somebody ought to try cleaning up the motion pictures and the radio

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broadcasting. Some ought to work out a national program of genuine adult education, to displace the half-fraudulent product now peddled by some schoolmasters who know nothing of adult problems. Somebody ought to . . .

Oh, well! There's no end to that list of imperatives!

Now, the planning and the basic research in all these fields of progress must be done by men and women past forty. Why? Simply because the mass of facts involved in each problem cannot be conquered by younger people—barring a few near geniuses. Age has the advantage here. And, in some fields, the woman past forty is best qualified to think and to lead. Once the program has been elaborated, younger people must be called in to carry it out—and now it is their energy that gives them the advantage.

For the college woman, above all, life begins at forty. She must live down a crushing burden of perverse schooling. The task consumes many years and often leaves scars. Our women's colleges have been called "spinster factories"; and Willis J. Ballinger, who so dubbed them, sums up their tragic weaknesses under four indictments. Few college women marry, says he, because, first of all, schools mislead them into thinking "that cerebration is all there is to happiness." The woman's college "builds up

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devilish inhibitions against the flesh. It makes domestic life repugnant." Secondly, the college makes women physically and socially unattractive. Thirdly, the faculties set up in themselves the model of dull celibacy and narrow-mindedness. Lastly, the college woman who wants to marry and lead a normal life has been cut off from the best connections as a result of college itself; she is "a commodity that cannot make contact with the other side of the market."

The pity of all this is that such women, originally attractive perhaps and certainly not fools, must reeducate themselves sometime after twenty-five.

Not until after forty will the products of the spinster factories see themselves in clear perspective and with the casual humor that flows from intelligent maturity. Thousands of young college women, vaguely discontented if not profoundly unhappy, spend their twenties and thirties in trying to find themselves. Those who marry organize their lives more easily. The rest too often fall victims, unwittingly enough, to what Anne Armstrong has called "the seven deadly sins of woman in business." Seeking personal salvation through work and careers, their chief maladjustments arise from the solemnity with which they regard the sober business of living.

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Said one such, in commenting on the characteristic:

"I wonder if we women in business are not overreaching the mark and failing, where we fail, not because we are unintelligent or untrained, but because we are too much in earnest, too conscientious, and above all, too hard-worked. The great fault of women is excess of virtue. Those who strike the happy medium are really the most successful. When we women play more, we shall create more."

Too few intelligent college women know how to play. Life is serious and life is earnest. And so continues for a decade or two after graduation. A mere maid of thirty-three recently commented on her plan of returning to teaching after five years of business experience. Said she, with a perfectly straight face, "Of course, I realize that if I spend the rest of my life as a teacher, I'll have to give up all thought of a personal life of my own. In a sense, you know, all teachers are social outcasts. But after all, it doesn't matter so much, does it? Because my life is really over." Now, with a loud and impolite guffaw, I ask you!

I venture to predict that her fortieth birthday will find our resigned young woman more spirited and blithe. Being highly intelligent, and substantially more mellow with an extra half-

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decade to her credit, she will realize that a great many years lie between forty and seventy. And she, like thousands of other women of forty, will begin to make the most of interesting days, trying at last to make up for solemn youth earnestly spent in the serious pursuit of a playless goal.

Thousands of women wish they had the courage of Jane Allen, who, as she relates in *The Forum*,<sup>1</sup> suddenly came to her senses, ten years after college, and began to live. She had been plugging away at a job which paid well and, as far as jobs go, pleased her. A married woman, she did not have to toil; but she had been infected with the American nonsense about work, so she kept at it for seven years. And then—

I had dinner with a business woman . . . In college she had been gay, free, careless, congenial. She has now been employed ten years. She is swift, hard, poised, incisive. Her life is a scurry "to make contacts," to "close contracts." There is not a song, not a skip in her any more. She has sold her charm, her humanness, her talents for leisure to her job. Time is money for her; it is never anything else . . .

This sorry spectacle shocked Jane Allen into her senses. She promptly jumped out of the briar bush of business and scratched her eyes back in again. She quit her job and set out on the

<sup>1</sup> April, 1932.

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high adventure of living. That forced her to reduce expenses on a heroic scale; so the family moved into a cheap suburb where they found a pleasant house with a garden. Now she reads good books, entertains agreeable people, plants flowers, and is conquering that first and last of all high arts, cookery. After two years of this, she bears witness to its pleasant adequacy.

I do not know Jane Allen. But I guess that she is now close to forty; and I add, for her consolation, that she probably needed those years of office drudgery to use up her energies and to open her eyes.

High achievements of women past forty are today almost a commonplace. We need not recite them here. The list is too long—and too well-known. Let a few cases suffice.

Here's a fifty-year-old high-school teacher. She likes her work but has considerable leisure and an itch to turn all her hours to account. Some years ago she picked up a cheap magazine full of love stories. She found most of them silly and faintly filthy. As she held her nose, she realized that she had heard many a tale from her students which was much more entertaining. So she asked herself: "Why not write up what these girls and boys tell me? They read this magazine. I'll handle the facts so that nobody's identity will appear. And I'll give a wholesome

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interpretation to the love problems so that every young reader will benefit."

She tried it, and succeeded from the very first manuscript. She turns out one or two stories a week, earning from them more than the school pays her. Often, when a girl brings her private troubles to this shrewd woman, our author suggests that she read some of the stories. There, in fictional form, the girl often finds herself mirrored. And she is helped mightily.

Not many women could do this, I know. But how many variations are there of the underlying idea of turning your everyday experiences to account?

Look through the records of eminent women listed in "Who's Who in America." Dozens of them first achieved distinction after forty—and many even later. Authors publishing first books range in age from eighteen to sixty-seven. Those bringing out the last books mentioned were women from thirty-six to eighty-seven years old. More than half the distinguished educational workers were especially active from fifty to seventy-five. And of those who gave up teaching between thirty-five and fifty, many went into other occupations, especially writing.

Elsewhere we learn of Mrs. Janet Little Story, who turned out a dozen publications between sixty-four and eighty-three, and none earlier.



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Emmeline Plunkett published several books between fifty-one and sixty-eight, and none earlier. Mme. Juliette Adam (Juliette Lamber) founded the *Nouvelle Revue* at forty-three and conducted it until sixty-three. Gertrude Jekyll was a painter, but at fifty-six began to write. She published a dozen books between fifty-six and seventy-five.

Here is Dr. Lillian Martin, of San Francisco, now eighty-two years old. In 1916 she resigned from her chair of psychology at Stanford University at sixty-six, which is considered a retiring age. But she plunged from easy college lectures into hard work at psychological clinics. Of late she has attacked the problem of salvaging the aged. She is still the chief of two of the largest mental clinics on the Pacific Coast. For her, life plainly got under way after forty.

The list is endless. But even this small sampling reveals the obvious truth that for woman, too, life begins at forty.

## *Chapter VIII*

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ONE of the most brilliant college students I know paralyzed me one day when, in reply to my query about his ambitions, he said that he intended to become a house painter. Knowing that he had won honors in every subject and had the further rare distinction of scoring an I.Q. of about 180, I suspected that he was spoofing.

"No, I mean it," he replied quietly. "It will suit me to a dot."

"Have you ever tried the work?" I asked.

"For two summers."

"And you can endure the monotony of pushing a brush back and forth across clapboards all your life?"

"For six hours a day, and a hundred days a year."

"Well, I give up. How a chap of your abilities—"

"Oh, you don't understand! While I paint, I think up detective stories and I work on mathematics."

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"What's that?" I blinked.

"I like to write crime fiction, and I find that I do my best work while painting. So too with mathematics. I get much more done while I paint houses than in any classroom. There's nobody around to disturb me, and the exercise of painting keeps me physically fit. After work I go to my typewriter and knock out the yarns I thought up through the day."

Sounds crazy, doesn't it? Yet he does it. After some pondering I came lumbering around to the conclusion that this youth is several jumps ahead of me and my doddering old generation. He knows that smaller and better America that lies just a little way ahead of this year.

Utopia lies just around the corner, and some people are weeping over the prospect. Our population ceases to grow. Soon it will dwindle. Another thirty years, and the decline will appear in the census returns. While experts differ as to the peak of numbers and the date of its arrival, there is general agreement as to the Great Change. Raymond Pearl, some years ago, calculated that, toward the close of the twentieth century, there would be about 187,000,000 Americans; and that this mass would not swell unless radical changes in living conditions intervened. More recently, Dr. Louis I. Dublin has predicted that the year 1970 will be the peak.

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There will then be, he estimates, about 148,000,000 Americans. Thenceforth, the horde will shrink until, sometime around the year of grace twenty-one hundred, only a mere 75,000,000 people will be dwelling within our present continental boundaries, unless tendencies now manifest are halted.

Many investigators view this with alarm. Their fears focus chiefly upon the enormous increase of elderly people. If birth control keeps up, while other basic conditions remain as they now are, future America, they gloomily prophesy, will look like an Old Ladies' Home on visiting day, when the inmates of the old Soldiers' Home call to pay their respects. Out of every hundred people, forty will have attained the age of fifty years or more. And then, oh! what disaster! The rule of The Elders will result in over-conservatism. Youthful enthusiasm for progressive development of the country will be wet-blanketed, in all probability. Trade and markets will decline. Land will be cheaper with the decreasing demands of a small population. And, as Dr. Dublin interprets the Jeremiahs, "A very disturbing picture indeed could be painted of the distorted social and economic conditions which may result from the changed internal organization of our future society." Julian Huxley has lately joined the Claque of

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Cataclysm, together with a goodly number of cautious eugenists who fear the effects of birth control among superior people far more than in the rank and file of humanity.

I cannot share these forebodings, in spite of the fact that I believe a population crisis is brewing which will come to a head between 1970 and 1975. Five years ago, in fact, I completed a survey and analysis of the "adequate opportunities" for superior workers during the next generation;<sup>1</sup> and was driven to a forecast which, at that time, struck me as gloomy and inescapable. I have, in the last two years, made further studies which wash away all the gloom. Utopia is already in sight.

The birth rate must be construed in the light of our entire economic social drift. It is not a thing apart. The workers in vital statistics are the first to insist upon this fact. To determine how serious the dwindling population will be as a social force, we must forecast all the other major influences in the Web of Life. Whatever the crisis of 1975 will be, it must be the result of a thousand and one interweaving factors of climate, geography, soil, agriculture, industry, trade, finance, politics, and international relations. Its song can therefore be sung only by a Prophets' Chorus of 500 male voices.

<sup>1</sup> "The Twilight of the American Mind," New York, 1928. See chapter on The Crisis of 1975.

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If there is one sure thing about 1975, it is that people then will be applying to all their affairs much more science and technology than the most enlightened few do today. Suppose that no further progress is made by our laboratories. Suppose all our engineers mark time in their present tracks. Suppose that the next generation does nothing better than adopt things already known. How will 1975 compare with 1932?

Today not one business man in a thousand has applied to his own store more than 1 per cent of the scientific discoveries which concern its operation and products. Not one banker in a hundred has grasped 10 per cent of the facts about money. (Many have grasped the money and let the facts go hang.) Not one financier in a hundred has insight into the money-and-profit system as a whole. I have never met an engineer who could persuade the corporation he served to make prompt use of every technical improvement which the engineer himself recommended as profitable. On all this moldy earth of ours, not a single town, county, state, or nation has as yet utilized more than a tiny fraction of well-established knowledge in perfecting its schools, asylums, hospitals, highways, and methods of conducting public affairs. Even in our finest institution for the feeble-minded, down in Washington, Congressmen (who labor under the

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delusion of statesmanship) still vote by vocal roll call, though Edison invented a mechanical roll call a full generation ago for their special profit.

It is easy to condemn people for this sluggishness; but progress is costly and delicate in view of the unanticipated disturbances from even slight improvements and novelties. If the world changes as much as 1 per cent of its methods and equipment every year, it will advance perilously fast. (Look at the havoc which motor trucks on concrete express highways have wrought upon the railways!) Nevertheless, people must press onward. It is not rash to assume that they will scrap at least  $\frac{1}{2}$  per cent of current methods and materials every year in favor of new. So, if there are today ten thousand well-tested projects and inventions clamoring for adoption, not fewer than fifty are likely to be accepted during the year by some influential corporation.

Now, each novelty modifies the total human environment, if not continuously, then nearly so. Progress does not move by arithmetical progression; its graph, when discovered, will turn out to be a series of immense upward lunges between which depressions and long, flat, stale stretches appear. The fifty units of progress for 1932 may not alter anything noticeably; then a single

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invention in 1933 may throw a hundred businesses out of gear, and before 1935 a new high level of prosperity will be reached. This makes middle-range predicting more difficult than some students of business (like Donham) seem to realize; and it makes long-range prophecies somewhat simpler than they appear. For instance, a few large statements can be made about 1975 with more assurance than about 1935. Here are those which bear on the problem before us.

In the decade between 1970 and 1980, electric and chemical power will be as cheap as water now is; energy will have ceased to be a factor in calculating costs of consumption goods. In advanced regions like our own country, Canada, England, New Zealand, and perhaps elsewhere also, food will have lost its significance in the family budget; for the application of scientific engineering techniques to basic crops will have whittled costs down to a fraction of the present. Already more than 75 per cent of man's diet can be thus produced, so far as technique goes; all that is lacking is enlightened farmers and enlightened bankers.

Clothing will be so cheap that nobody will worry over its cost, save on the luxury level. Housing will still be expensive, but less so than today; and regional planning will have trans-



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formed immense areas into parks, gardens, country homes, and lovely community centers. Air conditioning will have become a public utility in a few more progressive regions. Cities will be served from central stations with climate made to order. Thermostats and automatic humidifiers will deliver the Congo or Greenland to your breakfast table, with the turn of a dial.

In most lines of production the output of each worker, per unit of effort, will have risen far above the 1932 levels. Relative to our present situation, "technological unemployment" will grow immeasurably worse; but, as we shall see, it will actually be mitigated by many other factors in 1975. Basic production will be geared accurately to consumption, while distribution costs will have been reduced to a small fraction of the 1932 figures.

Education will likewise be geared more accurately to the demands and ideals of real life; everybody will be trained to handle at least five or six jobs well and to use leisure advantageously and pleasantly. Technical training will advance apace with general education; so that, by 1975, as I have shown in previous calculations, there will be not fewer than 2,500,000 and not more than 4,000,000 highly skilled scientists and engineers and other special experts in the world. Working as they will in organizations vastly

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more efficient than ours of today, these men will accomplish much more than their fathers of 1932 can; hence the pressure of their achievements will tend to speed up progress.

Preventive medicine, public hygiene, and general education will combine to increase enormously the absolute and relative number of upper-grade people throughout the world. Where today millions of children with good minds and good constitutions are stunted and retarded intellectually by hunger, bad food, narcotics, alcohol, overwork, evil companions, and a host of diseases mostly preventable, the world of 1975 will have delivered all such from bondage, except perhaps in the worst parts of the equatorial belt.

These last-named influences will also combine to enlarge and improve the upper age groups, especially those between forty and sixty years; these groups will preserve their physical energies and their mental alertness far more generally than nowadays, and they will, through better education, go on improving themselves not only for pleasure but also for economic profit.

Living standards for all classes of people will rise almost steadily; but the emphasis will shift from consumption goods to service, inasmuch as the law of diminishing returns has already begun to operate in restricting the satisfactions

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from material objects. Hence thousands now employed in factories will transfer to lines of work in which personal service is rendered to customers.

Political security will be almost complete, in 1975, so far as international relations are concerned; for each country will have in its possession chemical defenses which will enable it to exterminate the entire population of an attacking nation. (Three nations already have these.)

In what sort of a world will future Americans be living, when they cease to increase and become more and more a community of middle-aged? To me the convergent influences just mentioned dispel all the gloom which Huxley, Dublin, and others have conjured up.

They regard the relative decline of young people as a situation to be dreaded. I regard it as Utopia. The curse of the human race for the past million years has been the dominance of the juvenile mind. The epochs of hardship and high hazard not only favored the young, with their overflowing energies, but gave them a constant majority by killing off the elders. So long as the race lived on farm and afield, this was not serious—at least, not nearly so serious as today. For a clever young person could learn the affairs of a small farm and a tiny rural village and apply his knowledge through his years of

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high energy—which usually fell between eighteen and forty.

Today, no young man can learn the full sweep of realities—nor can any old man. Did not somebody once say that life has become complex? Well, there is something to it. But the man who has passed forty is gaining advantages over the younger one as a result of this change, while he is losing his handicaps of waning energy. In 1975 affairs will be ten times more complex than today, for the world will have become one huge neighborhood. Nobody younger than thirty-five will even scrape the surface of the current economic and social techniques. Hence all judgment touching them will fall, by natural selection alone and not by foolish mandates, to people in the upper decades. The harder the world as a nut to crack, the more important the elders.

At the same time, the young man will lose his former advantages of physical energy, for the simple reason that relatively less and less horse power will be required to achieve any given result. Super-power spells the doom of youth as the Autocrat of Action.

Nor will progress and development be discouraged by the dominance of the elders. In such forecasts, population experts go entirely wrong. They do not understand the psychology

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age. Young people are the conservatives, while the healthy and well-trained middle-aged are the progressives, if not the radicals. Between the fifteenth and thirtieth years, normal youths and maids are absorbed in social interests which sprout from sexuality in all of its vital aspects. Sports, games, excitements, fraternities, and amusements absorb their best energies; nor do we see any way of changing this animal trend, even if we thought it wise to do so—which we do not. Creative business, no less than creative research, has almost never come from young business men. Young men are properly kept in the ranks of junior executives, even when they are ablest. They are pushed into strenuous jobs such as selling—which takes horse power. But they have little or nothing to do with planning sales campaigns, still less with deciding on production policies. There is hardly an important industry or trade in which less than a quarter century of experience, based on technical training, is a safe basis of constructive management.

“What a man does before forty does not matter.” Thus Henry Ford, in a genial exaggeration at whose core lies a profound truth. What we saw clearly was that, in this age of mathematics and psychology, few men can find themselves in the first half of life. They cannot even work out sound schemes, for a sound scheme

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must be based upon broad insights into our whole economic and social order. When I look back upon my own years and recall what I thought about the world and its sundry potentialities at the age of thirty, I am forced to agree with Ford here. I even go a step further: I begin to suspect that civilizations and cultures for the past million years have cracked and crumbled mainly because strenuous young men got into the saddle and rode Old Dobbin to death.

The high, concentrated energy of the young will be discouraged. That is, it will be barred from many channels through which it used to flow. Already some of our larger corporations have learned their lesson in this matter. Having supposed that it would be useful to promote promising youths to positions of authority, they tried it out, only to find that they bungled in matters of high decision. Many a parallel may be found among very young bankers, college presidents, publishers, attorneys, and stock brokers during the past ten years. It now appears that the kind of enterprise typical during our pioneering age does not fit the new era. Heat, light, and power still are wanted: but youth furnishes heat and power, not light. Then, too, we need less heat and cheaper power. The pioneers of 1975 will be scientists steeped in laboratory lore or else social administrators

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able to draw on decades of memory and experience in handling people and cities.

The demands for our goods will decrease; our markets will dwindle. But not all perceive certain implications. The fever of material production and consumption which has burned out our cultural life for the last three generations at least will have run its course long before 1975. The fallacy of volume consumption will linger here and there for another decade or two, I dare say; but so too will astrology and chiropractic. As education grows more and more realistic, standards of living will rise, moving in directions far removed from the coaxing super-salesmen. The precious intangibles will gain over the basement bargains. Personal health, security, self-respect, study, travel, conversation, games, art, and the like will command more and more time, energy, and money; while clothes, cosmetics, liquor, food, showy house furnishings, lavish entertaining, and the like will lose ground. And with what net result?

The increase of intelligent older groups will put business in its place as nothing else can. We clamor today for economic reforms, mostly in vain, simply because our whole factory system is erected upon a sucker list. Whose names are written there? Read them and weep! They are these same bright, strenuous youths whose

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passing from power our prophets deplore. They buy the gaudy cars, the flashy clothes. They urge Ma to put a hundred-dollar rug in the parlor, so as to make a fine show before their friends. The boys and girls influence the family spending, especially in the luxury lines. The girls fall for the bunk about Beauty, Prestige, Social Status, and four-out-of-five-have-it. They are stupid spenders simply because they are sex-dominated spenders—and, like most of us, happen to have been very young when they were born. Hundreds of millions of dollars go to waste every year through these juvenile prodigals, who do not know the value of a dollar any more than they know anything else important. In 1975 this semi-swindle of fashion trades and luxury goods will have reduced to a negligible evil. Thereby the average family will be at least 20 per cent better off than now.

With a smaller population land values will surely go down. But how can anybody lie awake nights over this prospect? To me it is a sure signpost to Utopia. First of all, good farm lands ought to decline in appraised and taxable value to the point at which their crops pay a fair return on the capital invested in them. Can an area average no better than five dollars net return per acre with its best favored crop? Then one acre of it ought never to sell, as mere



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soil, for more than fifty dollars—and it would not be a bargain unless it went for twenty-five dollars. There are hundreds of millions of farm acres in America which ought to be turned into pasture and forest at once; and there are other hundreds of millions which should be deflated by at least 50 per cent. This would help draw people away from our metropolitan sink holes, thereby increasing farm ownership and middle-class country homes. Best of all, it would speed up the movement toward the county-city.

For many years I have firmly believed that the nearly self-sufficient county, incorporated as a single city whose farmlands lie within its own boundaries, comes closer to the ideal American life than any other arrangement. This means stable food supplies with minimal haulage and distribution costs; it means a stable population living in such contentment that it lacks motives for migrating; and it means, above all else, the scattering of the now crowded herd throughout the county, there to dwell in home-farm-garden units all within a few minutes of the business district down town.

The competition for jobs will, with important qualifications, grow keener. While many grieve over this, I exult. But my reasons are a trifle complex. They deserve a small volume. Let me hint at them here.

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Several years ago, I investigated the dwindling opportunities for our ablest people in the higher careers.<sup>1</sup> The Man in a Hundred, whose intelligence roughly equals that of the graduate from any one of our best colleges, finds fewer and fewer outlets for his topmost abilities. His is not so much the question of finding a bread-and-butter job as it is the far more stubborn problem of finding work that enables him to develop intellectually. A job adequate to the moron can always be found; one suited to the average man is seldom far to seek; but work that demands the highest mentality always has been rare and is growing rarer, relative to the total population and to the volume of the world's work.

I found that about 613,800 men and women between twenty-two and sixty-five years of age whose intelligence would rate as the best 1 per cent in our population existed in this country. I was able to locate not more than 176,200 positions requiring full play of their abilities. Thus some 437,600 Best Minds seemed forced into jobs below their abilities and hence vocationally maladjusted. A sorry prospect, indeed! And one on which nobody was able to throw light. But now I think I see a way out of the labyrinth.

<sup>1</sup> "The Twilight of the American Mind," New York, 1928.

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Of the Best Minds, one-half are women—say about 306,900. Of these 56.4 per cent are between twenty-two and forty-one. So about 173,000 feminine Best Minds come within the working age of our Utopian labor system. The others, about 134,000, would be exempt from bread-and-butter toil. And how about the men? A similar distribution occurs here: only 173,000 of them would normally be summoned to jobs.

Now, suppose we relieve the women for the dual purpose of raising children and developing home life. Then we would have to find only 173,000 jobs for the male Best Minds. But we have already on hand 176,200 such positions! Thus, on paper at least, we seem to have solved a most vexatious problem. It is, however, much more complicated than appears; and, in reality, we have not solved it yet, though we are well on the way. We must further take into consideration new conditions which did not exist when I made the original survey. Of these the greatest is the collapse of our overcentralized factories, stores, banks, and cities.

Overcentralization did not, in itself, bring on the collapse; but it enormously aggravated it when world trade and world credit crumbled. One of the first reactions, then, was toward decentralizing. As the colossal losses of big corporations, public and private alike, when

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operating below capacity, became evident even to the dullest, investors began withdrawing money from the biggest—thus still further depreciating their security values. Since 1929, small concerns have either flourished or at least kept alive and moderately active, while the mightiest have bred many a nightmare for their owners.

Our largest banks are hardly safer today than the village bank used to be. Our hugest cities are in deeper bankruptcy than most hamlets. So people flee big banks and big cities as never before. The day of the small and middle-size enterprise arrives faster than anybody had anticipated. Soon we shall all see that this multiplies opportunities for superior people past forty and serves to restore our lost social balance. For more individual units means more managers, more investigators, and more directors. More small towns self-governed call for more mayors and aldermen and municipal specialists of solid ability. We shall return to this trend in a moment.

Another new development is the growing conviction that the benefits of highly centralized control may all too easily be neutralized by the enormous consequences of human error in that control. The manager of a small garage may err in paying too much for his month's orders of automobile tires, but his loss is unlikely to exceed

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a hundred dollars; and it may be offset in a few months by trimming here and there. But a billion-dollar corporation, though less likely to go wrong in its purchasing department, sometimes errs—and then at what a price!

Between now and 1975, superior people will grow steadily less and less dependent upon low-grade workers. Drudgery disappears from farm and field, from mill and factory, from school and home. Super-power wipes out most of it; the rest will soon be erased by scientific organizing, by teamwork, and by inventions. Already we begin to drive out the stupid, the unskilled, and the misplaced alien, not with whips and scorn but through the kindlier method of firing him for keeps. Watch the outbound stream of European and Mexican toilers, and you see this process in its first spurt. It must accelerate with the years, for the superior people are gaining *relatively* on the inferior. For reasons into which I cannot go here, I think that emigration will increase considerably; we may even live to see a sizable efflux of native Americans into Mexico and Canada, nearly all of them being low-grade workers in quest of environments where low living standards prevail and give them a chance to cash in on their brawn. Those who do not leave will be thrust farther and farther back into the lands of the hill-billy and the cracker. By

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1975 the best quarter billion acres of America will hold none of their kind.

Well, then, if superior people multiply, what will they find to do in a small, stable population? A fair query, and a hard one.

But perhaps the most hopeful development of the past three years is the realization that all industry, finance, and trade, no less than all politics, have been founded on the sands of ignorance. Most of their leaders, being little more than promoted salesmen and elevator boys, have either sneered at research or have fallen short of comprehending the necessities of mature, objective analysis and fact gathering. Their policy has been that of the Arkansas farmer whose roof leaked badly: when asked why he didn't mend it, he said that when the weather was good he didn't need to patch it, and when the weather was bad he couldn't. When a business is booming along in fair weather, the leaders often refuse to finance research and turn their backs on experts simply because the firm is making money fast. Then, as hard times come along like an early frost, these same brilliant leaders grow panicky and trim their budgets to the bone; they discharge research men and experts first of all.

This folly has, of late, become so palpable that directors are forcing their executives to spend

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time and money investigating trade conditions, world politics, new patents, and improved processes. Every day it grows plainer that the business which knows most will survive, while the ignorant must perish. Gone those soft pickings of yore! Gone the era of the pot-bellied peddler and his dollar cigars!

If business continues to decentralize, it will need two, three, or even four times as many superior people for research, statistical surveys, and local management as are now employed. If our great cities continue to lose their population to small towns and villages, then these latter will require four, five, or six times as many high-grade experts in taxation, sanitation, education, police supervision, medicine, surgery, and social-welfare work as are today demanded. If, side by side with the mass production of basic crops like grain, hay, and cotton, there arise thousands of farms of medium size (say, between five hundred and three thousand acres) under scientific management, these will have to employ ten to twenty times as many agricultural engineers, agronomists, and superior executives as today. If our foreign trade in raw materials and factory products gives way to the exporting of technical experts and special services to governments and corporations, then heaven knows how many more superior men and women

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can be placed. So, you see, the great crash of 1929 appears to have been the luckiest event in American history; for it marked the beginning of a new era in which the nit-wits steadily lose ground to the Best Minds. Every month new opportunities crop up for some of the three million ablest men; and, within a few years, I believe, they will also open up for some of the three million ablest women.

For at least another fifty years, the world will move away from mere bigness, away from Cyclopean politics and Cyclopean states, away from billion-dollar factories, away from ten-million-headed cities, away from mass production, away from slums and racketeers, away from armies and profiteers. We shall slowly regain the small, the simple, the quiet, the peaceful, the gentle, the staid, and the modest. It may turn out to be only another swing of the pendulum; but so it will swing, for better or for worse. And who will gain? The individual. The consumer. The taxpayer. The craftsman. The housewife. The child.

Don't misunderstand me. I am far from the notion that the race will sink into the state of nature praised by Rousseau, and still further from the absurd thought that we shall discard the Machine Age and return to the Man with the Hoe. All the tools and devices of inventors



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will be cherished. But human nature will be cherished even more. So a fresh balance will be struck between the mere making of goods for profit and the enjoyment of things so made. Economists agree that the fatal weakness in our system for a century past has been the exaggeration of production and profits, to the belittling of sheer living.

We come now to one of the acutest and darkest questions. During the past twenty years the youths and maids of our land have profoundly influenced the world's business. They have been spending money in freakish quantity; and they have earned hundreds of millions of dollars, most of which they have used for their own sweet pleasure. Is this buying power likely to wax or wane? And how should business adjust to it?

Rash the prophet who ventures dogmatic answers here! Yet certain strong currents appear on the stream of human events. Whether they will rule or be neutralized by other forces still hidden, none can say. With this cautious reservation, then, let us look ahead.

In my opinion, the relative buying power of youth will decline during the next quarter century. (What will happen after that need not concern us just now.) This reversal of form will result from many trends in interplay. Chief among these are:

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1. The declining relative value of youth in the Machine Age, with its labor-saving devices and its intensive organization of man power.

2. The growing competition of the middle-aged, working to the disadvantage of youth in lines of work where seasoned skill and mental maturity lead to high wages.

3. The relative lengthening of the period of dependence (total or partial) upon the parents, as a result of the first two trends.

4. The prolonging of school life, especially among the well-to-do and the more intelligent classes, as a way of bridging the gap between childhood and adult employment, and as a means of better jobs.

5. The breakdown of city slums, of slum mill towns, of tenements, and other modes of living which have disintegrated family life; with the resulting trend toward a better American home.

6. The world-wide decline in the earning power of both capital and labor, which will mean relatively less spending all around (though probably with a steadily rising standard of living).

A word about each of these.

Youth's ancient advantage is passing fast. It lay, for a full million years, in physical energy, in enthusiasm, and in love of adventure. The young men won out inevitably when success hung upon brute force, upon endurance, and upon audacity. Exhausting themselves thus, they died young; hence each fresh generation was incidentally freed from serious competition with its elders.

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But the Machine Age has changed all this. Every machine that saves labor robs the young man of his unique asset in a competitive world. Already factories are full of immense structures which a little child or an old man or a frail woman can operate with ease, grace, and precision. Men of brawn are irked by these creatures of steel, for they give brawn no chance to do its deeds. Each passing year brings more labor savers upon the scene. Soon brawn will vanish, and with its exodus youth will have only one remaining advantage, its enthusiasm tinged with adventure. Can it hold its own with this trait?

No. For the frontier has disappeared. Wild beasts and savages no longer confront us. Industry and business grow mathematical and technical. Impulse is not wanted up in the front office, nor can the rah-rah boys find jobs even as bond salesmen any more. The era of Charles M. Schwab yields to the era of Walter Gifford. The next generation will want ten men of scientific bent to every one with a glad hand and a new smutty story for the boys in the hotel lobby. And this is hard on youth.

As public health improves, more and more people live on into middle age with vigor intact. Steadily the relative number of those past fifty rises; and insurance statisticians expect this trend to continue for many years, up to some

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critical point as yet unascertainable. In factory and office work these able-bodied elders compete successfully against the young; and their inferior energy handicaps them less and less, while their superior skill and experience often give them a distinct advantage, especially in more important jobs.

These influences combine to keep young people partly dependent upon their parents longer and longer. Among the upper income classes today it is not at all uncommon to find sons drawing on the old home for living expenses up to the age of twenty-eight or even thirty; and the daughters live at home until they marry—which happens later and later in life. This naturally serves to lengthen the school years, partly because there is nothing else to do and partly because higher education and vocational training help toward better and earlier jobs. Parents, at the same time, prepare to carry their offspring longer by having fewer children. Birth control is spreading swiftly throughout all classes, mainly under economic motivation.

The buying power of young people since 1910 has been enlarged considerably as a result of a weakening of the family as an economic unit. Tenement dwellers and mill-town slum toilers sent their young out to work while wages were high; and they allowed the greatest freedom in their spending largely because they could not well control it. Youths and maids lived on the

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streets, in the movie theaters, in dance halls—everywhere save at home in an old stuffy flat that smelled of the last ten meals and next Monday's wash. Out of every ten dollars earned, the young workers contributed perhaps two or three to the family larder and blew in the rest on a good time and clothes.

But this Jazz Age fades fast. Before the 1929 depression the turn came when thousands of families started to move out of the dirty cities into suburb and countryside. Of late this drift has swelled to flood dimensions; as times grow worse, sensible people seek relative security in the detached home with a sizable garden or else in the small farm within easy motoring distance from office or mill. This works to restore, in some measure, the only family unity. Youths do not live on the streets as much as they did a decade ago, simply because they have no money and are dwelling far from the madding crowd. The radio has helped wonderfully to keep them at home too. There are many signs pointing to faster and faster migrations away from great cities, hence to a stronger family life in which spending is done more as a group affair and therefore less as a sweet-sixteen folly.

All over the world, interest on capital, rent on land, and wages of labor must slowly decline; if they decline in step with one another, all will be well. The danger arises when one drops

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faster than the two others. But whichever way all three move, one trend remains fairly constant; it is the increase of productive capacity relative to world population, hence the diminishing relative value of the individual worker, when measured against either consumption goods available or against his funds for the buying of these. The machine and the organization contribute relatively more to the value of the end product; the button pusher and lever jerker add less and therefore will be paid less. This affects everybody, old along with the young. But youth loses relatively more here.

The upshot is that young people will buy less and less as time goes on. What they buy will fall more and more into two classes; first, goods and services for simple subsistence and, secondly, those which help toward self-improvement both vocational and cultural. Then, too, their influence within the family group will be considerably tempered. Indeed, as they grow serious, they may gain power within the home; and the young men may even help educate the young women toward rational consuming. Slowly the silly spender will disappear. Slowly comes the hour of triumph for the youth with an I.Q. of 180 who earns his bread and butter as a house painter for six hundred hours in each year and works at higher mathematics and story writing as a Way of Life.

## *Chapter IX*

### THE NEW DIVISION OF LABOR

“**YOU** are hopelessly inconsistent,” remarks a friend. “Not so long ago you wrote that the race can be saved only by youth. Here you argue that life begins at forty. In your recent survey of human stupidity, you exposed the frailties of the aged. You loaded upon them most of the blame for the present plight of all mankind. You must be growing senile.”

Maybe so. But I stand by all that I have said. We cannot look to the present generation past forty for salvation of any kind. Our only hope is in youth, and a better educated youth at that. The gravest weakness of the middle-aged lies not in nature but in nurture. It roots in an erroneous philosophy of life, which, in turn, has been fostered by ill-conceived schooling and home life. Both philosophy and schooling were once sound enough in a simple farm-and-village society, where the tempo was sluggish, progress snailwise, and the strain upon rulers of business and state slight. But as everything has accelerated, the race has become more and

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more a contest of young men. As everything has grown more complex, mastery has been postponed. These two phases of modern life, acceleration and complexity, have created a new situation which alters the ancient patterns. The division of competitive labor is determined more and more relentlessly in terms of sheer energy and depth of organized experience; the demands of energy being met only by the young, while the demands of wisdom are met only by the old.

But this lesson has not yet been learned. Home, school, and office still ignore it. So men and women of today have been sadly mistreated. Their awfullest blunder is that of leaving the crushing toil of administration to men past fifty-five; the proper tasks of all such center upon advising younger managers, in the light of long experience and leisurely reflection, as Plato saw. This was wisdom in ancient times, when management was infinitely easier than now. Today it cannot be flouted without disaster.

Clemenceau at seventy-six, sitting at a desk all day and attending conferences through half the night, as he undertook to dominate the Allies during the World War; Kitchener at sixty-four blundering away at the same imbecile enterprise, when he should have been playing golf or else learning to read—which he never could do with grammar-school skill; Papa Joffre at



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sixty-two, marching up and down France, sweating and grunting over a young man's job; Wilson at fifty-eight, always a half-invalid and then weakening in mind and body as he desperately fought to do the work of a hundred men with the equipment of less than half a man—these were the heroes of 1914 who shattered the old civilization through the incompetence of senile egotism. By 1918 they were four years older and a century more incompetent. None had learned that life begins at forty. All assumed that men of sixty and upward can meet people, harangue with congresses, exhort armies on the march, sign a thousand letters a day, organize a hundred secretaries, write proclamations, declaim before a dozen mobs, and pin medals on heroes by the myriad—and still remain sane.

This is madness. The heavy work of the world must be done by the young. Not alone the digging of ditches! The managing of large affairs must be theirs too. They need not become yes men who carry out commands of the graybeards; they need only learn to utilize the information and broad perspectives of the able old. They must look upon hard work as the sure road to wisdom, rather than as a stepladder to fame. They must seek brain through brawn. They must rise above the weak-witted ambitions of the egomaniac. But, to do this gracefully,

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they need a new education. Its keynote is the theme of this little book.

Teach them that life begins at forty; that they need not chew their nails in empty retirement then. Teach them that between twenty and forty a well-trained man has plenty of time to establish himself in a world which, as it improves inchwise, will reduce profits, wages, interest, and rent until all sensible people will see how futile it is to aim at riches and despotic power.

You know as well as I do that Americans have been brought up in a fashion quite the reverse of this. They were encouraged, away back in high school, to progress and progress and progress—which meant to work and make more money, then to work harder and make still more money; to buzz in the social bee hive, to join all the clubs, and to keep everlastingly at it until each artery hardened and the fagged brain halted in its tracks. Fired with this ambition, most of them became miserable around forty; for they entered a new and more terrible maladjustment.

In their clinical investigations of old age, L. J. Martin and C. DeGruchy arrive at the conclusion that most elderly people are unhappy because they have failed to vanquish some childhood difficulty on which they incline to concentrate moodily simply because they haven't

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anything else to do. Idle years breed involution. Man turns upon himself and devours his own vitals whenever he lacks external interests and the urge to grow.

This teaches a stern lesson. The forties, fifties, and sixties must be devoted more and more to expansive, exciting, and precious learning. To learn something new, we must forget ourselves and go lost in the subject. Thus we rise above the infantilisms which plague the empty hours of the senile. Above all, however, we must learn that there is a career for each decade, determined chiefly by the energy demanded. We must learn that the ways of youth cannot be the ways of middle age. We must learn that neither gains, in the long run, by usurping the other's place and power.

We must learn a new division of labor and responsibility. Let those past forty plan, while the young carry out programs. Where energy is essential, select the energetic. Where judgment based on long experience is most sorely needed, look to the elders for leadership. What could be more reasonable?

For a million years mankind has been guided by immature minds—often in overworked bodies. As in China and India today, so everywhere else in the past: people have died young, wisdom has accumulated slowly or not at all, and each

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generation has been compelled to start afresh from the bottom. This is why the world has progressed so laboriously until of late. Even now, fully one and a half billion mortals in Asia, Africa, and South America die off so fast that three of their generations come and go while two arise in America. Three-quarters of the human race are still old at forty-five and aged at fifty. For this horde, the good life ends long before forty; the rest is a tottering, fumbling misery of shattered dreams, thwarted desires, sickness, and poverty.

The very ambitions and skills which enable men to amass wealth later prevent enjoyment of the fruits of success. Overworking, carrying one's business problems to bed with one, scheming relentlessly to outwit one's competitors, entertaining customers with rich meals, heavy cigars, and liquor—all these habits bring on that dreadful thickening of the arteries. As the walls of these vital channels grow tough, they carry less blood. And one of the very first organs to lose part of its nourishment is the brain.

The mighty business man soon weakens in a way so subtle that only his closest friends detect it. His judgment loses its keen edge. Common sense crumbles. As the affliction sweeps onward, the mind sinks steadily toward the moron level—

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and sometimes reaches it, too. This is how it so often happens that middle-aged business men of wealth suddenly lose every dollar. They have become fools, without ever realizing it.

To make matters worse, the full burden of managing the larger affairs of society and business has always fallen upon men past forty, mainly because the young lacked experience, poise, judgment, and patience. The strain has broken them. So the records of middle-aged failures show up much darker than they might have, if the heavy labor of administration could have been delegated to robust youths.

Here is the place to correct an easy error which has lately been broadcast by excellent authorities—and which is doubly dangerous because it contains much truth. Physicians protest against the wholesale dismissal of the middle-aged. Thus Dr. J. A. Britton, at a convention of the American Medical Association two years ago, said:

American industry makes a serious mistake in discarding a man when he reaches the age of forty-five.

When this is done, the ten years of a man's life in which he attains his maximum efficiency are being thrown away.

The age of maximum efficiency begins at thirty-five and continues up to fifty-five, and the greatest degree of efficiency is attained in the last ten years. From the ages of forty-five to fifty-five a man delivers more in

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judgment, stability, and loyalty, and in every virtue except muscular agility and sheer muscular power. In professional baseball, for instance, a man may not be worth much at forty-five; but even in baseball I have noticed that it takes the old heads to win the pennants.

I agree that a man of forty-five ought not to be dropped cold. That ruthlessness leads only to disaster all around. But I think that, long before the dangerous age arrives, the employee should have been trained in the use of his mind and his experience, with the clear expectation that, at or near forty-five, he would shift from a job calling for more energy than he ought to expend to another job wherein he can turn to profit all that the years have taught him. There must be a new division of labor along natural lines.

Now, the sharpest and most natural division is that between the leader and the led. It happens, by the grace of God, to serve our purpose admirably, too.

“Design is for the master, execution for the servants.”

Thus Leonardo da Vinci, in his immortal notebooks. Leave the realm of genius, which is an exception to all rules. Apply his dictum to common affairs and common men. Who is the master here, who the servant?

Ninety-nine times out of every hundred, the master is past forty, the servant younger.

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Planning calls for mature minds, but the carrying out of a plan demands, above all, abundant energy. Here we have one of the foundations of tomorrow's civilization—and strangely like Plato's.

"How terrible!" cry the old-school Americans. "No more progress! No more boldness! Our land will sink into stagnant misrule under the Lords of Arteriosclerosis. New ideas will be sternly suppressed. Fear will play havoc with every constructive policy."

Well, my friends, history refutes you. It is the old men who are the radicals, and the young men who are the sappy conservatives.

Instead of filling this book with all the clear instances of high maturity in middle age, I prefer to offer a creative suggestion to several thousand high-grade business men who are turning forty and wondering—somewhat uneasily, I suspect!—how they will spend the rest of their days. What if they were to specialize in directorships? What if they were to become genuine experts in corporation policies and offer their services to a score of companies at once? What if they were to give up all other active work and use their heads only? I predict a sudden prosperity. For our businesses have been mismanaged by amateur directors. Most of the gentlemen elected to these high posts

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have given little thought to their duties. They take these more lightly than Helen Wills Moody ever took tennis. Many a student like William Z. Ripley can—if he is disposed—name scores of directors on the boards of great railways, insurance companies, and electrical power corporations who lack that broader foundation of understanding in matters touching public policy and statesmanship which is sorely needed at the top of our entire economic hierarchy.

We have, in the United States today, more than 25,000 corporations which sorely need more intelligent directors. They have been muddling along for years with the sons of multimillionaires, slick promoters, super-salesmen, vice-presidents of banks, and sundry other gentlemen whose only claim to seats around the mahogany table is their wealth (and usually their ownership of stock in the company). The tragic events of the past twenty years have demonstrated the pitiful incompetence of these directors.

What a different picture, however, were our 134,000 keenest masculine minds between forty-one and sixty-five thoroughly trained in directing the management of our great corporations, while the 173,000 best male minds between twenty-two and forty-one served under their direction. The former would function primarily as supervisors, advisers, and executives. The



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latter would administer and manage the affairs of the country.

Again, we have more than 38,000,000 young people under twenty going to schools which are crowded, undermanned and lamentably out of tune with the New Era. This army gathers bright and early in nearly 300,000 buildings for its instruction and uplift. What a chance for our 134,000 keenest feminine minds between forty-one and sixty-five to study, on the 300,000 spots, the problems of remodeling education! Could they do this, over and above their activities as housekeepers and mothers, would not some great benefit ensue? Within ten or fifteen years, we might have a genuine educational system.

But how about those over forty who are not Best Minds? How about the carpenter, the mechanic, the trained nurse, the surveyor, and all the other good and faithful servants of the public? Can they become masters, too? If so, what or whom will they command?

As matters now stand, they are the unlucky. Let's not blink at that hard fact. But they need not be. I see at least three enormous fields of opportunity for them as they step out of the sweaty ranks of heavy toil and prepare to utilize their experience in a more leisurely fashion. Before I describe the scenes, let me draw together a few broad facts about the numbers of people

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past forty and the volume of work to be done in the country.

One farmer now manages to feed ten city people; and, within a few more years, he will be able to feed fifteen at least, maybe twenty or more. By the same token, a man can feed himself on a modern farm by putting in only one-tenth of his time on the job. Our automobile factories can, if operating on a one-shift basis only, turn out seven times as many cars yearly as our public can buy. And, in general, the capacity of all kinds of factories runs between three and four times our current needs for the goods they make. With each passing season, automatic machines and organizations methods improve; and with each improvement the worker turns out more goods. Where will this end? Nobody can forecast the climax. But we all know that today we could dispense with fully one-third of all the 48,832,589 workers on record as "gainfully employed" in 1930. Without driving a single worker at top pace and without more than thirty-six hours a week of labor, we could manage nicely on 32,000,000 workers.

Now, there are, as of 1930, no fewer than 58,575,362 people between fifteen and forty-four years of age, inclusive. Suppose we drop from this huge army about one-third of all those of high-school age, and everybody over forty-one;

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we still have 50,000,000 people. What if we next exempt the 15,000,000 women between twenty-two and forty who would be likely to bear several children each during these years; this makes allowance for natural spinsters and childless wives. This leaves us with 35,000,000 people, or some 3,000,000 more than we need to support us in full comfort! Had we a benevolent dictator, he might relieve everybody over forty-one of all required work and still send to high school every youth and maid mentally suited to that type of work. At the same time he would relieve from job holding all women during their nineteen most important and most arduous years of childbearing and child rearing.

Needless to say, we should find a host unwilling or unable to stop work at forty-one. Among these would be toilers of inferior intelligence and excellent physique who, having no wider interests in life, would be better off on their jobs after forty. Then there would be superior people of marked creative ability and high energy; work would be fun for them, and they would not be denied the pleasure of carrying on. It is safe to say that at least 10 per cent of our 35,000,000 young workers would prefer to keep at their posts until far into their fifties or even later. This would serve to lighten the labors of the younger still further. A six-hour day and a

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five-day week would not appear fantastic then.

In such a Utopia we should have some 27,000,000 middle-aged men and women over forty-one and younger than sixty-five who could, if they wished, devote their full powers to something better than bread and butter. What an extraordinary civilization might ensue! Let us glimpse a few of its more splendid aspects.

First of all, young people would plunge into serious work early, instead of frittering away precious years in worthless schools. While energy is at its flood, it now has its chance to overflow into useful channels, instead of running to waste in football, joy rides, and sophomoric pranks. All of the able-bodied would go to work at part time in the fifteenth year at the latest. All would then begin to learn the serious business of making a living. The silly years of high school and college would be no more!

Secondly, the 27,000,000 men and women past forty would become, one and all, the masters in shop and mill, in store and factory, in school and home, in neighborhood and nation. In industry, mining, lumbering, and farming, no fewer than 450,000 foremen and overseers find work today; and, of these, certainly half ought to be over forty (and perhaps are that, though no evidence is at hand). Could we double the

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number, better management would ensue, provided the older men were put at work chiefly advisory. In fully 20,000 neighborhoods, rural and urban, there is crying need for active workers in social welfare and politics; never for fewer than a dozen in a single community, sometimes for as many as 10,000. Probably 50,000 would be needed to clean up sink holes like New York City and Chicago. Here are tasks for which young people are totally unfitted; they lack experience and worldly wisdom. It is, I think, conservative to estimate that the country ought to have a round million of full-time workers in politics, if it is to be purged of the dirty politicians and their abominable organizations. Social-welfare work calls for an indeterminable army of advisers, inspectors, and other mature assistants for the solving of poverty, crime, bad housing, and our many other social problems. Our public schools would be improved immeasurably if a million or two men past forty could be somehow persuaded to supervise groups of teachers and to serve as student counsellors. There are few worthier careers, in fact, than that of advising and aiding young people through their adolescent years. Had our pious citizens spent on such counsellors the hundreds of millions they have wasted on foreign missions, our land would be much better off today.

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Well, I shall not bore you with more statistics. My goal has been reached if you realize that millions of positions can and should be found for men and women past forty who are neither geniuses nor Best Minds. I grant that there are not so many positions as there are people between forty-one and sixty-five years. But that's great luck! For it means that nobody will have to work full time. Were each member of this host to devote ten hours a week to some such managerial or advisory work, that would be quite enough. With this division of labor, the world would jog merrily onward and upward.

## *Chapter X*

### PARENTS SHOULD END AT FORTY

**B**ACTERIA, insects, mice, and fools die young. The superior man barely strikes his pace at an age when the inferior passes his prime. The average mortal is old at forty, but the Best Mind is about ready to begin living at that age. As long as this is Nature's course, what can we do to favor those who deserve to live most richly?

First of all, we can put the superior young person to work much earlier than now, but on a part-time basis which enables him to continue his studies. Such an arrangement serves two high purposes. The learner finds himself in his chosen career much faster, and he pays his way as he goes. The plan, you observe, resembles that followed with considerable (but uneven) success by Antioch College. Whatever defects have developed in its application are due, I think, entirely to its novelty.

Again, we can place the superior young learner under the personal supervision of older advisers retired from active work; in short, under men past forty. These men will function neither as

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employers nor as formal trainers. They will serve rather as personal counselors. One such counselor ought to assume charge of not more than four or five superior youths; and he ought to give not more than ten or twelve hours weekly to the work.

More than anywhere else in the world, however, superior young people in America ride to swift ruin as a result of too much direction, too much coddling, too much prolonging of infancy by teachers, friends, and, above all, parents. Sturdy minds turn mollicoddle thanks to the eager but misguided efforts of self sacrificing elders.

How many men and women spoil their own lives and those of their children by grinding away to 'give the latter luxuries and privileges which the parents had, in their youth, desired in vain! They do too much for the young people. Worse yet, much that they do with noble intentions turns out to be useless, repugnant, or even harmful to the thankless recipients of adult favor. Here we come upon a major American vice that sadly interferes with life beginning, as it can and should, at forty.

It is powerfully reinforced by two other human tendencies: one is the well known craving to run other people, especially the helpless young who are dependent on the self-appointed manager; the other is a too keen sense of duty in



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shaping juvenile morals. I am not arguing that these are always evil forces. Far from it! They are, however, delicate forces which, in the hands of the inexpert, run wild and wreck the whole machinery of the home. Three common ways of bungling are to spend much time and energy after forty in maintaining a social standing for the children; secondly, to feed them "culture" at great expense, whether they like it or not; and, finally, to push them into "self-expression"—a monstrous self-contradiction!

I am not concerned for the moment with the evil effects all this bungling has upon the children. That sorry tale has often been told by critics of ultra-progressive education. But I do wish to show the parents how they are throwing away their own lives, and to no good purpose. Consider a man and wife who married when he was twenty-six and she twenty-four—a fairly typical mating. They are now forty-six and forty-four; and, during the past twenty years have raised three children, Bill, Mildred, and Joe, to the now ripe ages of eighteen, sixteen, and fourteen respectively. Bill is finishing high school this year. Mildred is a sophomore there. Joe will enter next fall. How is such a family managed, as a rule? You know.

Father slaves away to raise cash for Bill's college education, including fraternity expenses,

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a new evening suit, and maybe an automobile. Mother fumes and fusses over Mildred's friends, her dates, and her gowns, not to mention lipstick and the lesser trimmings. The family goes into debt to the tune of a few hundred dollars for the sake of a louder radio and a ruddier rug in the parlor, inasmuch as Bill and Mildred must entertain at home and make a good impression. Society demands it, you know. Life grows harder for the elders. It costs more than ever to support young people on the level at which they crave to play around. If Dad can ease up by fifty-five, he's lucky. And if Mom isn't bent and shattered by that time, it's because she has the constitution of a water buffalo. All this, as any sensible person should know, is a silly way of life. It injures both generations equally.

Bill at eighteen and Mildred at sixteen can and should take over the heavier half of the housework. They should learn how to buy groceries—and then buy them. They should understand what to do when an urchin heaves a rock through the kitchen window, and when the water pipes down cellar freeze because somebody left a window open beside them on a January night, and how to check up on the gas meter, the tax collector, and the laundry. At a pinch they should learn to lay new linoleum in the bathroom, eliminate a squeak in the family automobile,

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repair the front door bell, and cure the cat of melancholia. Such abilities are a hundredfold more important than modeling in clay a bust of Darling Mother, or attending the Children's Concert at Carnegie Hall, or composing a short story for the Senior Class in Literature. Let them master the little necessities of living in their teens, and what a soft snap they will have in adult years!

Half the business of learning to live consists of mastering just such chores to the point at which one performs them as automatically as walking or talking. At that high plane of accomplishment, they cease to be laborious. They become as natural as turning out the lights and opening one's bedroom window on retiring. So Bill and Mildred ought to learn them by doing them early and often, if only for their own sakes. But—what is more to my point—they ought to do them so that their parents may begin to live after forty. So to do, the parents must end their parenthood at forty.

Such a policy benefits everybody. The young will gain in many ways, above all by becoming independent and self-sufficient much earlier. They will outgrow their babyhood toward the natural close of babyhood; and we shall no more witness the flabby, weepy weaklings, male and female, who now clutter up our homes and

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asylums. Having to stand on one's own feet is, all in all, the greatest good fortune that can befall anybody. Standing on one's feet successfully is the basic achievement. For those who can do so, life may begin even before forty.

Starting to work young, they will—as I have shown—master many of the simpler jobs well before they are thirty. Had we space here, it could be demonstrated that any boy or girl a little above average intelligence (and we have millions of such) can learn a new trade every six months without straining mind or muscle. So, in a well-ordered society, a man and wife in their late twenties would both have four and twenty skills, most of which might be turned into cash from time to time. This high versatility must come, as an economic necessity; and, thank heaven, it can come. One of its noblest blessings remains unappreciated: when these versatile people pass forty, they find it no hardship to drop the rougher jobs and concentrate more and more on the lighter. Nor are they enslaved to a single factory, or shop, through early narrowing of accomplishment. They are a new species of Jack-of-All-Trades.

The world of late has lost sight of the great truth that life itself is a task-of-all-trades. Try to make it anything else, and you spoil it. All work and no play make Jack a dull boy

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simply because Jack is born a Jack-of-all-trades. All play and no work make him still duller, for the same reason. Likewise, work of only one sort makes him a poor worker in the larger sense. He becomes less adaptable, in mind as well as in body, as he narrows himself to a single set of operations in the workshop. Hence he finds it harder and harder to endure changes of fortune, scene, diet, and everything else. Far more terrible than *rigor mortis* is that *rigor vitae* which sets in as the single-track mind crystallizes in its groove. It is a living death which knows not its own demise.

The American pioneer was ever a flexible creature. His descendants have been losing the most precious trait of their heritage. And this loss is one of the hundred things that have been sapping our strength. Study our bread lines in this year of disaster and you will find proof of my words. The gaunt ranks are crowded with farm hands who cannot drive automobiles, with chauffeurs who cannot grow radishes, with typesetters who cannot use typewriters, with English composition teachers who cannot handle a lawn mower, and with Ph. D's who cannot write their own language. Half the labor of caring for these ten million poor devils consists of drilling them for new jobs; and half consists of breaking through the awful *rigor vitae*, the

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stiff-mindedness of the petty specialists who have forgotten how to make a living and have never known how to live.

"Oh, I couldn't do *that!*"

"I never studied that subject."

"I'm a printer. You don't think I'd descend to shearing sheep, do you?"

"I'd rather wait a while longer. I may find work in my own line."

So run the stiff-minded replies. Behind them all lurks a dullness of imagination. The poor weaklings cannot conjure up fresh lines of attack. They need somebody else to stir them to directed action. Left alone, they sit blankly on park benches, watching the swallows and the traffic cops. They have lost that primitive consciousness of life. Life has, for them, ceased being a task-of-all-trades. So, you see, they are nine-tenths dead.

They were not born so. Their parents might have delivered them from their fate. Will the rising generation of fathers and mothers learn the lesson of the past five years? Let us hope so. If they do, they themselves will gain no less than their children. For they will enter on a middle age of blessed leisure unafraid of what may happen to their offspring.

## *Fins*

### WE EXIT, ENVYING

So, we repeat, you of the Great Age which will soon begin anew are the luckiest of mortals. You first of all will taste the fruit of unlimited power. The core of the fruit is leisure, and the seed thereof is freedom.

Already you enjoy the products of a power a thousand fold greater than that of a solitary pioneer hewing his way through the wilderness. Soon you will be enjoying twice as much as now. With each increment you exert yourself less. Muscle yields to mind and sense. Thus you spread your energies over a longer time. Thus also you live longer in better health. The strain of making a livelihood will be concentrated in the two decades of peak power, during which time you will be preparing yourself for "the last of life, for which the first was made."

Before you there will be no despair, behind you no vanity. From childhood to the coming of old age, you will expand serenely, ever learning, ever tasting new joys. At forty you will be wiser and happier than at thirty. At fifty you

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will be clearer, steadier, and surer than at forty. At sixty you will be planning automobile trips to Mexico, a new sailboat, a fresh study of your village finances. . . .

I say you will. But will you?

If you use your mind, yes.

Have you a mind?

. Let us see!









